Home by BCI603

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Summary: *Discontinued* I'm currently in the process of rewriting this story! It'll be "Home: Remastered" so be on the look out!

1. Chapter 1

"Mike, calm the shit down." Dustin said, groaning as the 13 year old continued pacing in front of everyone. Mike glared at him and he shut up.

"Mike, she's a strong girl. She'll be fine." Joyce said, standing up and stopping him by putting her hands on his shoulders. He bit his lip and looked up at her again.

"I can't loose her again." He said softly.

"I know, and you won't, Sweetie. I'm sure they'll be back soon."

"It's been an hour." He said.

"Hey, they're fine, Mike, okay? He's kept her safe for a year and he'll keep her safe for as long as possible. You know that." Jonathan said. Just then, Mike's mom busted through the door, a wild look on her face. Everyone looked at her in shock. She saw Mike and relief flooded through her. She rushed to him and pulled him into a hug.

"Oh my goodness, Michael! Where have you been? I haven't heard a word from you all day!"

"I'm sorry mom, there's just been a lot going on." He said.

"Like what? It shouldn't have been so much that you couldn't call home." Mike looked at everyone else, not knowing what to say.

"Hey, Karen?" Joyce asked. Karen looked at her. "I think it'd be best if we wait until Chief Hopper gets here, and we'll explain everything."

"Are you in some type of trouble, Michael?" She asked sternly. He shook his head.

"No, he's not in trouble. At all." Mike glanced out the window and saw headlights and realized it was Hopper's car. He squirmed out of his mom's grip and yanked the door open and ran out. Eleven had done the same, almost kicking the door of the car open as she rushed to hop out.

"El!" Mike exclaimed in relief.

"Mike!" She exclaimed, just as relieved. They met in the middle, hugging tightly. Everyone rushed out to see what was going on, and everyone had to smile at their little reunion. They probably hugged each other like that for a good ten minutes, when Dustin finally said,

"Hey love birds! We're her friends too!" Eleven giggled and she and Mike let go of each other and Eleven went to hug them all. Mike stood facing the opposite way of everyone for a couple of seconds, trying to discreetly wipe his eyes, having gotten emotional hugging her.

"You alright kid?" Hopper asked, putting a hand on his shoulder. He sniffed and nodded, looking up at him.

"I'm fine." He said. "Just happy." He bit his lip and looked at the ground. "I'm sorry."

"For?"

"For the way I acted earlier."

"It's okay, kid. Everyone breaks down every once in awhile. I think you needed it." Mike nodded in agreement. He turned around and walked to the group along with Hopper. He smiled as Eleven hugged everyone.

"So, Michael, is she the reason you left that little fort up?" Karen asked. He nodded, a small grin on his face.

"Yeah, Eleven. El for short." She raised an eyebrow. "It's a long story."

"A very long story. Why don't we go inside and let El go clean up and we'll have a talk, okay?" Joyce told everyone. They all agreed.

"Hey, uh, El? I brought you some clothes." Nancy said. She had stopped by their house on the way back to the Byers and gotten her some. Eleven smiled at her.

"Thank you." Joyce showed Eleven where the bathroom was and got her situated.

"Let me know if you need anything okay? And just call when you're done and we can dry your hair." Eleven nodded and Joyce shut the door enough to where there is a tiny crack. She went back into the living room with everyone and finally looked around.

"What the hell happened in here?"

"Steve might have gotten his ass kicked." Dustin said. "But he put up a good fight!" He said, grinning.

"Dustin!" Steve exclaimed, rolling his eyes.

"By who?"

"My brother. It's not a big deal. We took care of it and we'll help you clean everything up, Mrs. Byers." Max said.

"Awe, thank you, Max. For now, though, I think we should probably explain everything to Karen." She looked at Hopper, who immediately nodded in agreement. Everyone sat down to listen.

"Well, it all started the night Will went missing…"

About an hour later, everything had been explained to Karen, who was just a tiny bit shocked.

"Sweetie, why didn't you tell me? I'd have tried to help out. You know you can talk to me." She said, brushing Mike's hair out of his eyes. He sighed, fighting the urge to roll his eyes at her, and said,

"You wouldn't have believed me, and you probably would have grounded me for the rest of my life for having a girl in the basement."

"Don't remind me." She said. "But you're right. I'm not mad, okay? But if anything else like this happens again, I want to be told."

"Yes ma'am." He nodded.

"Joyce!" They heard Eleven call quietly.

"Duty calls!" Joyce joked as she got up, and a few laughed as she left to go help Eleven. She had the clothes on and was using the towel to

squeeze the water out of her hair.

"You ready to dry your hair?" Joyce asked. She nodded. "Do you remember what a hair dryer is?"

"Yes." She nodded again.

"Okay good." By the time Joyce was finished drying her hair, she had Eleven giggling. When they were done, Eleven's hair was hanging right above her eyes. They went back in the living room and Eleven immediately went over to where Mike was sitting on the floor and sat next to him. He looked over at her and smiled. She lifted his arm and scooted closer to him, putting her head on his shoulder and putting an arm around his stomach. It was kind of awkward to Mike at first, because everyone could see them, but he finally ignored it and put both of his arms around her. Thinking no one was watching, he kissed the top of her head, lingering there for a few seconds, breathing in the sweet scent of her hair. Someone was watching, and it was Jonathan, who took a quick picture of the two as Mike kissed the top of her head. When the picture was ready, he showed it to Nancy, who couldn't help but awe at the sight. Everyone was still pretty jittery and talking with each other, so Mike looked down at Eleven, a smile on his face. She looked up at him.

"Mike?" She asked.

"Hm?"

"You didn't break your promise." She said. He raised an eyebrow in confusion. She smiled and said softly, "You promised me a home." He then remembered, and smiled.

"I did, didn't I?" She nodded.

"I'm home."

2. Chapter 2

Thank you to everyone who has reviewed my story so far! I really appreciate it! If you have any ideas or anything you'd like to happen, just let me know, and I will most definitely try to incorporate it into the story! Hope you enjoy!

P.S. Sorry it's so short! I thought that this was a good place to end it, but chapters will be much longer as we go along! :)

P.P.S. More Mileven fluff will definitely come along shortly!

"Michael, we need to-" Karen started to say, but stopped as soon as she saw that her son was asleep, both arms wrapped around Eleven. She smiled a small smile.

"Go on home, Karen, he'll be fine here. We'll bring him home tomorrow." Joyce said. Karen nodded.

"Nancy, are you coming?"

"Uh, yeah, I really need a shower." She said. She kissed Jonathan on the cheek and left with her mom.

"Are you guys staying here too?" Steve asked Dustin, Lucas, and Max, who all nodded. "Okay, well, just give me a call if you want a ride home." He left too. Those who were awake looked at each other. Dustin and Lucas started giggling at their friends, all cuddled up together on the floor.

"Oh grow up." Max glared at them. They stopped and looked at her. "According to you two and Will, he has been depressed and heartbroken since she left, give him a break."

"I'd have to agree with her, boys. Let him be happy. Let them both be happy. When you fall in love with a girl who loves you the way they love each other, you'll understand." Joyce said. Hopper let out a cough from the other side of the room. "Oh shut it, Hop, you know they're in love." He started grumbling as he stood and went to the kitchen to get a drink. He opened the fridge and the Demogorgon

that Steve and Dustin had stored in there fell out.

"What the hell?" He yelled loudly, which woke both Mike and Eleven up. Eleven glared at Hopper even though she knew he couldn't see her.

"What?" Dustin asked, and then saw the Demogoron on the floor. "Oh, about that, uh…" Hopper just ignored him and picked the slimy thing up with the towel around it and took it out back to get rid of it. Dustin pouted.

"Dude, what would you have done with it anyway?" Mike asked tiredly.

"I don't know, I could have handed it over for scientific research or somet-" A pillow smacked him in the face and he saw Mike glaring at him and Eleven looked sad. "Oh, shit, I'm sorry, I didn't mean-"

"I know. It's okay." Eleven said. She yawned and stretched, bumping Mike in the forehead on accident. "Oh, sorry Mike." He chuckled.

"It's okay, El. Wanna get on the couch?" She nodded and the two moved to the couch, it being big enough for them to lay beside each other. Hopper started to say something but decided against it, knowing he'd have both Eleven and Joyce on his ass about it. Mike put an arm around Eleven and she put one over his stomach, putting her head on his chest.

"You need to eat more. Too skinny." She mumbled, but everyone heard her. Mike snorted.

"Oh he eats all the time, Sweetie." Joyce said. "All the boys do. They're growing boys."

"Eat more eggos." She said. Everyone laughed at that.

"That's why I'm so fat." Hopper said, joining them on the other side of the couch, giving Mike the I'm watching you look. Mike saluted him.

"You're not fat, Jim." Joyce said, rolling her eyes. He shrugged. He looked over and saw the two kids already asleep, and then heard a loud snore and saw Dustin, Lucas and Max passed out on the floor.

Jonathan had long retired to his room, and Will was in his bed asleep.

"Looks like it's just us." Joyce said. He nodded and rubbed his eyes. "Do you think we have to worry about the lab anymore?"

"God, I hope not. I made sure to put an idea in Owens head before we went and closed the gate." Joyce raised an eyebrow and he explained.

"Oh, I certainly hope so. She deserves it." Hopper looked at Eleven, who was like a daughter to him, and nodded.

"She really does."

3. Chapter 3

The next morning, Mike woke up, unable to move. He looked down and saw Eleven, and then smiled. He reached up and pushed some hair out of her eyes. He looked around and saw Dustin, Max, and Lucas still asleep on the floor, Joyce and Hopper were in the kitchen, and Will was sitting in a chair watching TV.

"Hey." Mike said quietly, trying not to wake Eleven up. Will looked at him and grinned.

"Hey."

"You feeling better?" Mike asked.

"Oh yeah. I haven't felt this good in a long time. What about you?" Mike glanced down at Eleven and nodded.

"So much better it's insane." Will grinned at him again.

"I'll be even better when I get food in ma belly." Will joked. Dustin sat straight up at the word 'food', which woke the other two up.

"Food? What are we eating."

"Well, apparently Hopper went to the store and got some eggos and some other things." Eleven's head popped up sleepily when eggos was said, much like Dustin had done.

"Eggos?" Mike laughed as she sat up. She scooted away from him so he could sit up too and then scooted right back so she was close to him.

"When all the other food is done we'll make you kids some eggos!" Hopper called.

"You guys need to call your parents and make sure they know you're okay and that you'll be home later." Joyce called. They all groaned and did so. Mike came back into the living room, silently fuming, after talking on the phone with his dad, who answered instead of his mom.

"Sorry son of a bitch, just a waste of time talking to him." He grumbled as he sat back down beside Eleven.

"Mike? Why you mad?" Eleven asked, putting her head on his shoulder. His anger slowly went away then.

"My dad answered instead of my mom. He literally just said "Okay" to everything I said. That's it." He rolled his eyes.

"I'm sorry." She said, putting her arms around him in a hug. He smiled a small smile and hugged her back.

"It's okay, El."

"Food is ready!" Joyce yelled and they all rushed into the kitchen. When their food was put in front of them, they all started to stuff their faces.

"Hungry, huh?"

"We only ate breakfast yesterday." Mike said, and the others nodded in agreement.

"I haven't ate in three days." Eleven said with a mouth full of food. Everyone looked at her.

"Why?" Joyce said. She shrugged innocently.

"You still need to tell me where you've been for the last couple of days, young lady." Hopper said, pointing a fork at her. She swallowed her food and took a sip of orange juice.

"Went to see mama." She said. "And sister."

"Sister?" Everyone chorused.

"Sister." She nodded. "Eight." She said.

"As in…?" Joyce asked.

"Experiment number eight." She told them. "With me when I was younger. She escaped."

"Where is she now?" Lucas asked. She shrugged.

"Police were after us. They were killing people that hurt them. Tried to get me to find them. I found one, but I didn't kill him. I was supposed to, but he had kids." She shoved a forkful of eggos into her mouth. "She put a wall up to hide us and before we left, I told her I had friends. Friends that I had to go back to and help. She wanted me to stay but I couldn't. I had to come back. Nice lady on bus talked to me though." She smiled at that. Everyone didn't know what to say.

"She had others with her?" Hopper asked. She nodded.

"Police were shooting at us." She pushed her empty plate back and looked at them.

"Wow." Dustin said in awe.

"What kind of abilities does she have?" Will asked.

"She can make people see stuff that others can't. She showed me a butterfly. It was pretty. And she showed me…" She stopped talking then, kind of dazed, her eyes beginning to water.

"El?" Mike asked softly. She looked at him and blinked.

"She showed me papa." She whispered. Everyone looked at each other.

"He's gone now, El. He can't hurt you anymore, I promise." Mike said. She looked at him, a twinkle in her eye when he said that.

"Promise?" She smiled. He smiled back and grabbed her hand.

"Promise."

4. Chapter 4

One Month Later…

Mike and El were in the basement waiting on Dustin, Lucas and Will to arrive after school. They were just chilling in their little fort, cuddled up together under a blanket as Mike read a book to her. She had a smile on her face the entire time. When he finished the chapter, he folded the corner of the page and put the book down. She looked up at him.
"So, um, do you remember last year when I asked you to the snowball?" He asked. She nodded.

"Yes."

"Um, there's another one on uh, Saturday, if you maybe still want to go?" He asked nervously. She grinned widely and nodded.

"Yes! I have to ask Hopper though. Hopefully I can." She said. He nodded and smiled. They sat quietly for a few minutes, Mike playing with her hair. "What you doing?" She asked.

"Oh, uh, braiding your hair." He said.

"Braiding?" He nodded.

"Yeah, you know how Nancy had her hair pinned up on the side kinda?" She nodded. "That's a braid. When Holly gets up from her nap I'll see if she'll let me braid her hair so I can show you." She nodded excitedly. "And when you're hair gets longer, it'll be easier to braid. I can really only just do small pieces right now."

"Never cutting my hair again." She said, shaking her head, her brown curls flying all over the place. He smiled again.

"Well, you might want to get it trimmed every once in awhile. That's what I do because I have a lot of hair and it gets long quick." He told her. She looked at him confused. "Trimming is when you cut just a little bit off. They won't be cutting it all off."

"Oh." They stayed there for a few more minutes and went upstairs

when Karen called them up.

"Ma'am?" They chorused. Lucas, Dustin, and Will were there, along with Joyce and Hopper.

"Why do you have braids all in your hair?" Hopper asked, an eyebrow raised. All she said was,

"Mike." She grinned at him and with a blush, he grinned back at her.

"Okay then. Let's sit down at the table and have a little chat." He said. He, Joyce and the kids all sat at the Wheeler's dining room table.

"Are we in trouble?" Dustin asked.

"No, no one is in trouble. Dr. Owens gave me something today." He said, trying not to grin. He looked at Joyce who smiled. He took something out of his pocket and unfolded it. "This is a birth certificate. For Jane Eleanor Hopper." Everyone's jaws dropped and looked at each other. Eleven grinned excitedly. "Remember when I asked you when you wanted your birthday to be?" He asked. She nodded. "Well, according to this, you were born on November 7th, 1971. You're 13 years old." She got up and rushed to hug him. He smiled and hugged her back. Everyone else then hugged her too and Mike kissed her on the cheek before she sat back down.

"Now, Dr. Owens did tell me that we should wait another year before you start really going out and doing stuff." That wiped the smile off her face, along with the other teens. "But, since I don't want to keep you hidden and stuck in a house for another year, I'm not taking his advice. But I have two rules." She continued frowning. She was tired of so many rules. "One, you cannot use your powers under any circumstance. Unless you or in of your friends are in actual, immediate danger, understand?" She nodded. "And two, you need to wear this." He handed her a box with a tiny pink bow on top. She opened it and there was a charm bracelet that had an E, a heart and what looked like a waffle.

"Is that a waffle?" Lucas asked, looking at it.

"It is." Hopper said. "I had Mike help me out with it."

"Yeah, the guy thought I was weird when I asked if he had a waffle charm." He said. "He didn't but he made one for us."

"This is so cool." She said, grinning at him. "Thank you." She looked at Mike and took it out of the box. "Help me?" He nodded and helped her put it on her wrist and it covered up her tattoo.

"It will cover your tattoo, which is why I want you to always wear it, okay?" Hopper said. She nodded, smiling.

"I love it."

5. Chapter 5

phieillydinyia: Thank you! I'm glad you're enjoying it! And as of right now, Brenner is out of the picture, at least in this story. It wouldn't surprise me if he came back in season three though!

unicornkeeper: You'll just have to wait and see! ;)

Friday Afternoon

Mike was relieved when he finally got home after school, Troy wouldn't stop bothering him during his last class and he was pissed at the world.

"I couldn't even finish my work so I'm like the only one in class that has homework." He grumbled to Nancy, who was trying to help him and the others with their homework.

"He's just a dick bag dude, ignore him." Dustin said.

"Dustin!" Nancy threw a balled up piece of paper at him. He grinned.

"Sorry Nancy."

"Idiot." She mumbled. The phone rang and Nancy got up to get it. "Mike! It's El!" She called. He got up quickly and went to the phone.

"Hey El!" He said excitedly, just the thought of her cheered him up.

"Hi Mike, guess what?"

"What?"

"Hopper finally said that I can go to the snowball with you."

"Really? That's awesome!"

"Yes. I have to go, Hopper is teaching me math. I wanted to tell you."

"Okay, well, if you need any extra help with it I can try and help. I'm

okay at math."

"Okay! Bye Mike!"

"Bye!" The two hung up and Mike went back to the kitchen in a happy mood.

"What was that about?" Will asked.

"Hopper is letting her go to the snowball tomorrow night."

"Ooh, are you going as dates?" Dustin asked, fluttering his eyes. Mike felt his cheeks heat up as he blushed.

"Shut up." He ignored the question and went back to his work as Dustin and Lucas giggled. Max and Nancy just looked at each other and rolled their eyes while Will just continued his drawing, as he had finished his homework already.

"How come Will always has his homework done before us?" Dustin asked, giving Will the side eye.

"Because he doesn't joke around as much as the rest of you." Nancy said absentmindedly.

"Oh, true."

Saturday Night

"Hi Mrs. Byers!" El said excitedly as she saw Joyce walk in, with a dress, shoes, and another bag, which she didn't know what was in it.

"Hi Sweetie! Aren't you excited?" El nodded excitedly.

"Very!"

"Well, let's get to work, we have to be back in two hours to help Will get ready." El nodded and led Joyce to her room, where she got started on El's hair.

Two hours later

"Hey El, you excited for your little date with Mike?" Jonathan joked

when she and Joyce arrived back at the Byers house. El raised her eyebrows in confusion.

"Date?" She asked.

"Figures Hop wouldn't tell you about that." Joyce muttered to herself. "A date is basically when two people that like each other go out and have lunch, dinner or, anything really, including dances."

"Me and Mike are going on a date?" She asked. Joyce smiled.

"Yes ma'am you are." El smiled excitedly.

Meanwhile, at the Wheeler house…

"Mom!" Mike exclaimed.

"What? You look so handsome! Oh come on, don't look at me like that, this is your first dance!" Karen exclaimed as she took pictures of him. Nancy walked down the stairs, looking as beautiful as ever. "Oh my goodness, your turn!"

"Mom!" Nancy chuckled as she posed for the pictures.

"You two stand together. I want to take a couple before you two leave." They brother and sister stood next to each other while Karen took pictures of them. "Don't they both look great, Ted?"

"Uh huh." He didn't even look at them. Mike had to literally bite his tongue to keep from getting smart with him.

"Just ignore him, Mike." Nancy said quietly. He just grumbled to himself. They finally left after another million pictures, as Mike put it.

"I don't understand why he's such an ass. He doesn't even care." Mike rambled. As he did so, Nancy listened to him, commenting every once in awhile. Once he was finally done with his rant, she said,

"I know he hasn't been the best dad, Mike, but at least he's around. I know all his old ass really does is sleep and eat but we're lucky that we at least have him."

"Yeah, but he sure hasn't acted like a dad, to any of us. He's never taken me to a football or baseball or basketball game, or anything like that, and he's never taken you to those father daughter dances that you used to want to go to."

"You're right. Completely right." She said, glancing at him. "I hate the fact that he's never spent time with you like he was supposed to. I don't care that we never went to those dances, mom was the main reason I wanted to go and some of my friends told me that they weren't as awesome as mom said. You know how she likes to exaggerate stuff." She nudged him and he smiled a small smile. "But you're his only son, you'd think he'd go out and do stuff. You should get tickets to the next football game and see if he wants to go."

"What if he doesn't?"

"Hell, if the sorry ass doesn't go, ask Hopper. I'm sure he'd love to go to a football game." Mike bit his lip.

"I don't know about that, I think he wanted to kill me when El told him I asked her to the snowball."

"Nah, he likes you. He just wants to scare you a little bit."

"Oh, he's scared me more than a little bit, that's for sure."

6. Chapter 6

When the two arrived, Mike immediately went to join Lucas and Max at a table and Nancy went to give Jonathan a quick kiss on the cheek and went to tend to the punch bowl.

"Where's El, Dustin and Will?" Mike asked upon reaching the two.

"Right here!" Dustin almost yelled as he and Will walked up.

"Dude, what the hell happened to you?" Mike asked Dustin.

"What?"

"You look like you have a birds nest on your head." Lucas touched his hair and Dusting smacked his hand away.

"I worked hard on this you assholes!" He grumbled.

"El had to go to the bathroom." Will told Mike quietly. Mike nodded. Soon, it was just Mike sitting at the table, considering the others were up dancing, including Dustin and Nancy which he decided not to question. He was just glad he was happy. Every Breath You Take began playing and the gym door opened, and walked in El. He looked up and saw her, standing up. She looked around until she spotted him and they walked towards each other until the met in the middle.

"Wow, El...You look beautiful." She looked up at him and smiled in thanks. "Do you, um, want to dance?"

"I...don't know how."

"Me neither, wanna figure it out?" She nodded and smiled. He took her hand and led her on the dance floor, coincidentally near Dustin and Nancy. "You put your hands, uh here." He put her hands on his shoulders, "And I put mine here." He put his hands on her waist nervously. She smiled. They started swaying back and dancing, Nancy and Dustin just grinned at each other, and Lucas couldn't keep the grin off his face, until Max pulled him in and kissed him. After she pulled away, he was shocked, but then went back to his cheeky grin. Will was having fun dancing as well, and Mike and El just stared

into each other's eyes, smiling. Nancy and Dustin looked over at the two just in time to see Mike kiss her. He pulled away, blushing and she smiled widely and put her forehead against his as they continued dancing. Dustin looked at Nancy, his mouth wide open.

"That was the cutest thing I have ever seen." She said, and then rolled her eyes at Dustin. "Oh come on, you know it was. Be happy for him, Dustin."

"Oh I am, I'm just surprised he had the balls to do it." He said. She rolled her eyes once again.

"I don't think I've ever seen a group of kids curse as much as you guys do. And this is the second time they've kissed, according to Mike."

"Yeah, Mikey boy!" He exclaimed even though Mike couldn't hear him. Nancy just laughed and shook her head at him. After two more dances, Jonathan cut in and asked to dance with her. Dustin looked sad, but Nancy said,

"Hey, save me another dance or two before the end of the night, okay?" She winked at him and he grinned and nodded. He went back to the table where everyone had also decided to stop dancing.

"I see you had a lot of fun dancing with Mike's sister, huh?" Lucas asked. Dustin grinned and Mike rolled his eyes.

"Did you two have fun?" Dustin asked Mike and El, who both nodded, a blush forming on their cheeks. "Hey, I saw you two kiss but I'm not gonna make fun of you for it, you know I just like teasing you." El stuck her tongue out at him and that tickled the hell out of him.

"I saw Max kiss Lucas." Will said cheekily.

"No way." The two blushed furiously, although they were holding hands under the table, just like Mike and El.

"Attaboy!" Dustin smacked Lucas on the shoulder, causing the others to laugh.

"Hello, ladies and gentlemen!" Mr. Clarke said, walking up to the group. They all waved.

"Are you guys having fun?" He asked, pulling up a chair to sit with them.

"Yes sir." They chorused.

"Well good! I'm glad! Have we met? You look familiar." He said to El, who looked at Mike like a deer caught in headlights.

"This is the chief's adoptive daughter, Jane, but we call her El because her middle name is Eleanor." Dustin said immediately.

"Don't you have a cousin named Eleanor, Mike?"

"Uh, yes sir. She went back to Sweden. She was just visiting."

"Oh, that's right! She had blonde hair too, didn't she?"

"Yes sir."

"Ah, okay. Well, it's nice to meet you, El! Are you going to be attending next semester?" She didn't know what that meant but figured it was about school so she said,

"I'm homeschooled." That's what Hopper told her to say if someone asked.

"Ah, okay. Well, I better get back to chaperoning." He joked, standing up. "If you ever need help with school, El, just let me know. I'd be glad to help." She smiled at him and nodded and he walked away.

"So what are we doing after this?" Dustin asked.

"As far as I know, my mom is going to order pizza for us when we get back and we're gonna hang out in the basement." Mike said, taking a sip of the punch that Nancy insisted he drink.

"Have you finished the next campaign?" Will asked him.

"Not yet, I just have to do a few more things and it'll be done. By next Saturday for sure."

"You better, 'cause you've been slacking, Wheeler." Lucas said, giving

him a knowing look. Mike rolled his eyes.

"Oh shut it, Sinclair."

Later that night, at the Wheeler House

"I'll see you later this week, okay?" Mike said as he was saying goodbye to El. She nodded and smiled at the picture he handed her. It was one that Jonathan had taken of them together.

"Thank you." She made sure Hopper wasn't looking and quickly kissed Mike on the mouth and then hugged him goodbye before he could really move. She was in the car by the time he came back to reality. He smiled and waved at her as Hopper drove away. She waved back at him and he then heard,

"Awe, how sweet!" He turned around and saw Nancy watching him, the door wide open. He blushed furiously and glared at her. "Oh come on, don't be mad. That was adorable." She grinned at him and nudged him in the side as he trudged passed her, grumbling about how she didn't understand the aspect of privacy. She just laughed as she went upstairs while he went to the basement with the rest of his friends.

7. Chapter 7

redpandagod: The chapters will eventually get longer! At some point, I promise haha.

Wednesday

"I got two tickets to the game Friday." Mike told Nancy when he got home after school.

"Really? Cool! Ask dad when he gets home."

"I will. He's probably gonna ignore the question or make up some bullshit lie about it." He said, sitting down to do his homework.

"And if he does say no, like I said, ask Hopper to go." He bit his lip and nodded, starting on his math homework. That night, during dinner, Mike brought it up.

"Hey dad, I got tickets to the football game on Friday. Do you want to go?" He asked. Ted took a sip of his drink and said,

"You know how busy I am, Michael. I doubt I'll have time to go." Mike sat back in his chair pushing his plate away, and glared at him.

"You know what, you're full of crap. All you're gonna do is sit in that freaking chair and sleep."

"Don't you talk to me like that, I'm your father."

"Yeah, a piss poor one at that. Mom, can I be excused?" Karen sighed and nodded. Mike wanted to say so much more, but considering he respected his mom and sisters enough not to, he bit his tongue and went up to his room.

"It's true, dad." Nancy said. "Can I be excused too, mom?" Karen nodded once again, and joined her, picking up Holly and taking her upstairs, leaving Ted at the dining room table again. Nancy knocked on Mike's door and said,

"Hey, can I come in?"

"Whatever." He opened the door and then flopped back on his bed, looking at one of his comics.

"I'm sorry about dad." She said, sitting next to him.

"It's not your fault. I honestly don't care anymore. It's obvious he'd rather eat and sleep than hang out with his son. He'll regret it one day."

"Hell yeah he will. He's gonna regret a lot, trust me." She patted his back. "I'm gonna get ready for bed. If you need me just knock on my door, okay?" He nodded. She ruffled his hair and left the room, shutting the door behind her.

Thursday Morning

"I'm gonna ask Hopper later tonight. El wants us to take her around town to look at Christmas lights." Mike told Nancy as he sat down for breakfast.

"Oh, that's sweet!"

"Yeah, she's never seen them. Or a Christmas tree for that matter. Mrs. Byers has told her all about decorating and stuff and El wants to help her decorate their house. I think Hopper is going to take her shopping for the first time next week."

"Awesome! When you see her later, tell her that I can take her anytime she wants."

"I will. Okay, I better go before Dustin busts up in here wondering where the hell I am." He rolled his eyes. Nancy chuckled and nodded. Mike left on his bike and met up with Lucas, Max, and Dustin.

"Did you ask your dad about the game?" Lucas asked Mike.

"Yep. He said he has to much to do." He rolled his eyes. "All he's gonna do is lay on his ass."

"I'm sorry dude." Mike shrugged. Throughout the school day, Mike didn't let anything upset him. He just kept thinking about how excited El was going to be when she sees the lights. He and the guys

hung out until about five thirty when they had to go home, and Hopper was coming to pick him up. He said goodbye to his mom and Nancy and ran out to Hoppers car.

"Hey kid." He said, giving him a smile.

"Hey Chief."

"Call me Hop."

"Huh?" Mike looked at him surprised.

"You know you heard me." Mike chuckled nervously and nodded.

"Okay, Hop."

"You have a good day at school?" Hopper asked a few minutes later, attempting to talk to the quiet teen.

"It was alright. I didn't have a lot of homework or anything." He responded. "I uh, actually wanted to ask you something." Hopper raised an eyebrow.

"Is this about El or…?"

"No, no sir. I uh, I got two tickets to the football game tomorrow night yesterday and I um, I wanted to know if you wanted to come?" He asked, looking at him, biting his lip. Hopper looked at him, kind of surprised. He didn't expect the kid to ask him that.

"Oh, well I haven't been to a football game in a good while, so I'll come."

"Oh, I didn't think you would." He mumbled. "But great!"

"Why didn't you ask your dad?" Hopper asked. Mike's mood changed almost instantly and Hopper wondered if that was the right question to ask.

"I did but he said no." He answered.

"Why?"

"He never wants to do anything with us. He'd rather eat and sleep all the time. I've never been to any sports game, other than a football game with my grandpa. But that was probably four or five years ago." Right then and there Hopper decided that he would start taking him to different sporting events. Maybe even his friends too.

"Oh wow, I'm sorry kid. I'd love to go. What time does it start?"

"Uh, 6 I think. I'll make sure with Nancy tonight though, she knows." Hopper nodded.

"Well, this is it." He said, parking his truck. Mike had never been to the little house.

"This is nice." He said, getting out of the truck.

"Yeah, it's pretty small though. After New Years I'm going to start looking for a house closer to town. She deserves to have as normal a childhood as I can get her." Mike nodded in agreement.

"She honestly does. And I think seeing Christmas lights is one of the best ways to start." Hopper chuckled as he got out of the truck with Mike in tow.

"I think so too."

8. Chapter 8

I hope you guys like this chapter! I personally think the ending sucked. Does anyone have any requests for this story? If so, shoot me a PM or just a plain ol' review!

I hope everyone has a Happy Thanksgiving! :D

"Hi Mike!" El said excitedly, almost immediately tackling him in a hug when he walked in. Hopper couldn't help but smile at how excited she was. She was all bundled up in a big coat, a hat that Mike had given her, one of Hoppers overly big scarves and gloves.

"You ready to go kid?" He asked her. She nodded excitedly.

"Oh, wait." She ran to the kitchen and grabbed another pair of gloves, handing them to Hopper. "Forgot these."

"Oh, thank ya, kid. She's gotta keep me straight." Hopper joked with Mike, who grinned back at him. "Alright let's go, by the time we get back to town most of the lights will probably be on." She nodded excitedly. "You alright getting in the back?" He asked Mike, who nodded.

"Yes sir." Hopper went around to his side while Mike awkwardly got in the back, bumping his head on the door frame.

"Ow." He mumbled and El giggled. He smiled at her. She got in and once the teens were settled, Hopper started off. El messed around with the radio until she found a station playing Christmas songs.

"The Christmas tree lighting is Sunday." Mike said. "With the parade thing and all."

"Ooh, can we go?" El asked.

"Maybe, we'll see." She grinned at Mike, knowing that was a yes.

"Look El!" Mike pointed out the window. She looked at where he was pointing and gasped. She stared at the lights in wonder as Hopper

slowed his truck down so she could look at them better. There were other people walking around the neighborhood with their kids and showing them the lights.

"You two want to get out and go look?" Hopper asked. El looked at him and nodded excitedly. He found a place to stop and parked, and El immediately got out to let Mike out. He once again bumped his head on the door way.

"Ow. Again." She giggled even harder this time and Hopper chuckled.

"God, you're getting tall, kid." He said, shutting the door behind him.

"It's a curse, I tell ya." Mike joked, fixing his hat. Hopper chuckled.

"Whoops, hold on." Hopper said and grabbed a camera out of the truck. "Joyce made me promise to take pictures so, say cheese!" He snapped a picture of them before they could even react, which then had them laughing and he took another picture. Hopper gladly took pictures of his adopted daughter and her...boyfriend? He didn't know what was going on there but he decided to ask Mike at some point. Sure, he was pretty protective of her, more so now that she was actually going out around people instead of being stuck inside all the time. He trusted Mike, and could tell he was head over heels for her, and she was too, even though she didn't know it.

"Mike, what is that?" El asked, grabbing Mike's hand and pointing at the top of someone's house, where a lit up Santa Claus and reindeer were.

"That's Santa and his reindeer."

"Like in the movies?" She asked. He nodded, smiling at the face she made. She pulled him down the sidewalk, pointing at things and asking him what they were even if she kind of knew what they were. "What does a candy cane taste like?" She asked.

"Remember those little red and white candies I give you?" Hopper asked her, walking on the other side of nodded. "That's what they taste like."

"Oh! Can we get some?" She asked. He chuckled.

"Sure thing, kiddo. Hey, you two stand here and I'll take a picture of you." They stood in front of one of the particularly brightly lit up houses, an arm around each other, their noses and cheeks pink with the cold, smiles on both of their faces. He took the picture, and then kind of squatted down to their heights and turned the camera around and took a picture of the three of them. They all laughed and continued walking, El mesmerized by the lights.

"What's up lil Wheel!" Steve called, jogging up to them. Mike gave him a look, much like the one he gave him when he called him Nancy in the back of the car.

"Lil Wheel?" El asked, confused.

"It rhymes." Steve shrugged. She shrugged too, still confused. "You guys having fun looking at the lights?" He asked, walking along side them.

"Yes!" El immediately answered. He chuckled.

"She's never seen Christmas lights before." Mike told him.

"Oh really? You guys should check out my house, my parents go all out for Christmas, or any other holiday that might require decorations really. It's a couple houses down."

"You up to it, Hop?" Mike asked. Hopper looked at him, an eyebrow raised. "I just mean…" He started rambling again.

"You know you ramble a lot?" Hopper asked. Mike blushed and nodded. He chuckled. "Yeah, I'm up to it. I need a good workout anyway."

"Awesome." Steve said, grinning. They still walked slowly, so El could look at every detail she possibly could. When they reached Steve's house, she was amazed. She couldn't even speak.

"Damn." Hopper said as Mike said,

"Wow. How the hel-heck?"

"Like I said, they go all out. It's a pain in the ass putting it up and

then taking it down a month later." He said. Just about every inch of the house was covered in lights, and there were little Santa Claus's, reindeer, candy canes, anything you could think of, spread out all over the yard.

"This is…" She thought of the right word.

"Amazing?" Mike asked, and she nodded, wrapping her arms around him and putting her head on his shoulder. He hesitantly put his arms around her too, almost afraid to in front of Hopper, and rested his cheek on top of her head. Hopper took a picture of it. He was definitely gonna be the dad that documents every single thing possible. After looking at a couple more houses, Steve said his goodbyes and went home for dinner, and Hopper, Mike, and El made their way back to Hopper's truck.

"You two want to go get some hot chocolate then get dinner?" The two teens nodded. As Mike was getting in the back again, Hopper said, "Don't hit your head again, don't wanna take you to the emergency room for a concussion."

"Me neither." Mike chuckled, managing to not hit his head. They went to a small cafe and got hot chocolate and then went to the restaurant across the street. Once their food arrived, Mike almost immediately began to stuff his face, which made Hopper laugh.

"Hungry?" Mike nodded and continued eating. He barely stopped to drink any of his drink. "Slow down there, kid, don't want you choking on anything." He chuckled. Mike blushed and swallowed his food, drinking some of his drink.

"Uh, ha, sorry. I don't know why I'm so hungry."

"You'll probably have another growth spurt soon or something." Hopper said. El put her burger down and looked at him confused.

"What is growth spurt?" Mike snorted quietly but she ignored it.

"It's when someone grows a lot over a short period of time." Mike explained to her.

"Oh. Is that why you so tall and skinny?" This time, Hopper snorted,

loudly. Mike blushed and nodded.

"Uh, yeah." He mumbled and continued eating while she giggled.

9. Chapter 9

Thank you to everyone who has replied to my author's note so far! Thanks for the ideas, which I will most definitely be using! I've already got ideas and setting everything up to start writing, with the help of an amazing friend! It'll be a couple of weeks, probably after Christmas or New Years, because I want to write a couple of chapters before I post them here!

P.S. The actual football game WILL be in the next chapter. :)

"Does El know what singing is?" Lucas asked Mike as they rode their bikes to school the next day.

"I'd like to think so." He said, giving him a weird look. "I mean, she's not stupid, Lucas."

"No, I know. I didn't mean it like that-"

"I know dude, chill." Mike rolled his eyes. "I'm sure Hop's let her listen to his old records or whatever."

"Do you think she'd be game to sing with us at your mom's Christmas Eve party?" Dustin piped up.

"Uhh, I don't know but I can ask. I doubt she'd even know any of the songs."

"True. Well, if you see her later just ask her." Lucas said. Mike nodded.

"I honestly wish my mom would stop making us sing every year." Mike said.

"Oh come on, you know you love it." Dustin said, nudging him. "When we were younger you used to love it."

"You act like we're in our thirties or something."

"You sure act like it sometimes with your moody ass." Max said as she

skateboarded up to them as they locked their bikes up. He scowled at her.

"It's just puberty. He's further into it than us because he's older." Dustin said giggling.

"You know damn well there isn't a certain age for that, dipshit." Mike grumbled and walked into school without them.

"Huh, what's up with him?" Will asked, walking up to them. They all shrugged.

"He seemed a little out of it on the way here." Lucas said.

"He probably had another fight with his dad. I heard he's been fighting with him since he asked him about the game tonight." Will said.

"How do you know that?" Max asked.

"Nancy, who told Jonathan who told me."

"Oh."

"Apparently, his dad can't say a word to him without him getting pissed." Lucas told them, and then the warning bell rang and cut their conversation short. They all rushed in the school and to their classes.

At lunch, Mike wasn't in a better mood whatsoever, and hardly ate any of his food.

"Dude are you okay?" Lucas asked about halfway through lunch. Mike looked at him with tired eyes.

"I'm fine." He responded dully.

"No you're not. Did you have a fight with your dad or something? Or did something go wrong last night while you were out with Hopper and El?" Max asked.

"No, that was fine. I had a lot of fun. My dad was just being an ass and we got into another argument. Plus I didn't get any sleep. I'm fine

guys, don't worry about me." He said, finally taking a bite out of his sandwich, which he barely ate. They looked at each other and decided to leave it alone, knowing Mike would probably snap at them if they continued bothering him about it. After lunch, his mood changed for the better, but he wasn't the usual cheery Mike, but then again, he hasn't been all that cheery in over a year.

"Okay, what the hell?" Max asked Mike as he grinned widely for no reason.

"What?"

"What's got you so hyped up?" Lucas asked. He shrugged and rode his bike in circles around them.

"I don't know. I do know, that I'm taking a nap when I get home." He said. The others just chuckled at him.

"Don't forget to be at my house around 5:00." Will told him. He looked at him weird. "To help out with the lights remember?"

"Oh, yeah. I will. I'll see you guys later!" He called. They waved at him. He put his bike in the garage and went in the house to greet his mom and sisters. "Will one of you wake me up at 4:45?" He asked. The two nodded and he went to lay on the couch. Once he was comfortable, he easily fell asleep. His mom woke him up at 4:45 on the dot and he sat up, grumbling to himself about how tired he was. She smiled and patted his shoulder. He went and got the tickets and anything else he'd need and said his goodbyes and left. He arrived at the Byers house a few minutes after five.

"I was thinking you weren't going to show." Dustin said as Mike walked into the house. Mike looked at him weird.

"Dude, I'm just a few minutes late. It's only, "He looked at his watch and rolled his eyes, it's only 5:11." Dustin snickered.

"Hey Mike, you willing to get up on the roof and help me? Everyone else is too scared." Jonathan asked. Mike chuckled and nodded. Jonathan got the ladder and held it as Mike climbed on the roof. He joined him as Will went outside to get their stereo and started a

Christmas tape, causing everyone to either laugh or grumble about how it was only December fifth. "How good are you with a hammer and nails?" Jonathan joked. Mike acted like he was thinking for a few seconds.

"Eh, pretty good, I'd say." Jonathan chuckled.

"Good. Okay so, here's half of the nails and I want you to put about a foot's distance between each one, starting here." He pointed at the top of the roof, where it started to slope down. "We're starting here and then going all the way around. I'm gonna do this side. Got it?"

"Aye, aye, captain!" Mike saluted him and Jonathan chuckled. Around 5:30, El and Hopper arrived and Mike was literally just about finished, with he, and Jonathan's side. Jonathan had eventually left the boy to it and went back on the ground to help everyone else out. Mike was basically using the hammer and nails to let all of his anger and frustration with his dad out. When he finished with the nails, he realized that Hopper and El were there and waved down at them. El waved back at him excitedly and Hopper just gave him a small wave as he went inside to talk to Joyce. Someone turned the radio up particularly loud for the song playing, so Mike started dancing even more like an idiot on the roof, making everyone else laugh.

"What are you guys laughing at- Oh my goodness." Joyce laughed with them as she and Hopper went back outside to see what they were laughing at. Mary's Boy Child by Bonnie M. was playing and Mike was still dancing like an idiot. Before the song was over he stopped dancing and climbed back down the ladder, noticing the time. It was a short ride to the football field from here, so they had time to get there. As soon as both of his feet hit the ground, El was in his arms. He smiled and hugged her back. He kissed the top of her head.

"We should probably get going, kid." Hopper told him. He nodded.

"I'll see you after the game, okay?" He told her.

"Okay. Have fun." She smiled at him. He and Hopper got in the truck and Mike waved at everyone as they took off.

10. Chapter 10

I hope you guys like this chapter! It's not the best but it's almost 3:30 AM when i post this, and I wanted to post it on Friday, but it's Saturday now soooo, yeah. Anyway, I hope you like it! And in a couple of chapters I'll give you guys a little spoiler for the *IT and Stranger Things* crossover!

When they arrived at the game, they gave their tickets to one of the teens that had been roped into it, and took their seats at the top of the bleachers, more or less away from everyone else.

"Do they still have the same coach?" He asked Mike.

"Uh, I guess. It's some old guy." Hopper snorted.

"Yeah, I see his old ass out there." He pointed to him. "He was my old football coach."

"You played football?"

"Yeah, quarterback, actually." Mike looked at him like he didn't believe him. "Hey, I have plenty of proof! I got a shitload of pictures somewhere in the cabin." Mike chuckled.

"Okay."

"I'll show ya next time you're at the cabin." He said, making a face at Mike, which caused him to laugh.

By half time arrived, their team was winning by 4 points and it had gotten 10 degrees colder and Hopper gave Mike his hat.

"You want to get anything from the concession stand?" Hopper asked. Mike shrugged,

"I guess some hot chocolate. I have money." He replied, looking at him.

"Nah, don't worry about it." He started to get up but Mike said,

"I can go get it." He said. Hopper grinned and nodded, pulling his wallet out.

"Here's a ten, get two hot chocolates and anything else you might want." Mike nodded and gave him a small smile. He watched the teenager hop his way down the bleachers and off to the stand. He kept an eye on him but an older guy a few seats down came up to him and sat next to him.

"Is that your son?" He asked. Hopper shook his head.

"It's my daughter's boyfriend." He responded with a smile.

"Ah okay. He seems like a nice kid."

"He is. He's got a big heart, considering he's only 14, well, almost 14 I think. You know how 14 year old boys are at that age." The old guy chuckled and nodded.

"Oh yeah, I remember those days."

"I do too, and I can say that he's nothing like me or other teenagers." They talked for a couple more minutes and the old guy went back to his seat. Hopper looked towards the stand and saw Mike making his way back before stopping to talk to someone, and then continued back up the bleachers. He gave Hopper his drink and took a sip of his, shivering at the feeling. Hopper laughed and Mike blushed, though you couldn't tell because his face was already red from the cold. Hopper did almost the same thing, which made Mike laugh as well.

"Having a good hot chocolate when it's cold like this is one of the best feelings ever." Hopper said. Mike nodded in agreement, drinking some more of his. By the fourth quarter, their team was still winning, and would most likely win.

"You idiot! What the hell?" Mike exclaimed when someone played the wrong move ***(I have no idea how football works so that's why there's no details xD)***. He realized he cursed and said, "Oops, sorry." Hopper chuckled.

"It's fine, kid. I'd rather you say hell then some of the things Dustin

does." Mike tilted his head to the side a literal and made a face, nodding.

"True. He is a potty mouth."

"It'll only get worse."

"Yeah, he's gonna get a permanent bruise from us elbowing or hitting him for it. I swear he does it around El on purpose."

"Oh God, let's not get her started. She won't stop, and I know that for a *fact*." Mike chuckled and nodded.

"He'll corrupt her eventually."

"I'm dreading the day where she curses me out using every word in the book."

"Me too." They laughed. After the game, their team winning, they went to the same restaurant they took El to and got burgers.

"So, do you want to play football or any sports next year?" Hopper asked. Mike shrugged.

"I highly doubt I'll play football. I'm too skinny, as El says," Hopper chuckled, "and I'd probably break in half or something. I like basketball though, so I might try out for that."

"Are you any good?"

"I'd like to think so, yeah." Mike grinned.

"Hm, we'll just have to see then. When you're on break we can go to the park and play a game or two with your friends and El. That is, if you want to anyway."

"Yeah! That'd be awesome! I'll probably be like two inches taller then." Hopper snorted and nodded.

"At this rate, you'll be taller than me by the time you're 16." It was silent for a few seconds, and thankfully not an awkward silence. "So, I've been meaning to ask but, uh, are you and El...You know," Mike

raised an eyebrow, "Are you boyfriend and girlfriend or…?" Mike blushed.

"I haven't asked her yet." He scratched the back of his neck. "I don't think she knows what boyfriend and girlfriend is. She hasn't asked. It'll be awkward as hell if she asks me that." Hopper chuckled.

"I'm sure if she hears the words she'll ask eventually. Either me, you, Joyce, or even Nancy." Mike nodded. "Also, I can tell how freaked out you are because you think I'm gonna give you *the talk* but I'm not. At least, not yet, because I trust that you're a good kid and won't hurt her, because you and I both know that if you broke her heart she'd probably break you leg." Mike snorted and nodded at that.

"Yes sir. I don't plan on it. Ever, and that's a promise. And I don't break promises."

11. Chapter 11

While Mike and Hopper were at the game, the boys played around outside while El and Joyce stayed inside and watched a Christmas movie before they started decorating the tree. El wanted to wait until Mike and Hopper got back. Half way through the movie, she heard the word *girlfriend*. She's heard it before, and kind of understood the concept of it, but she wasn't sure so she asked Joyce,

"What is girlfriend? And boyfriend?" Joyce looked at her, an eyebrow raised. "I know a little bit, but it's confusing still."

"Well, being boyfriend and girlfriend is when you go on dates, you remember what a date is, right?" El nodded. "You hold hands and kiss. There are other things for when you're older, but I'll explain it then." El looked kind of confused at that but nodded anyway.

"Like me and Mike?" She asked.

"Well, yes, I guess. Has Mike asked you to be his girlfriend?" She shook her head. "Hm, he's probably just nervous. You know, you could ask him to be your boyfriend." Joyce said, smiling at her when he eyes lit up.

"Really?" Joyce nodded. "I thought boys had to ask girls."

"They usually do, but girls can ask boys too. There's nothing wrong with that." El nodded, a smile on her face. A few minutes went by until El asked,

"Are you and Hopper boyfriend and girlfriend?" Joyce almost spit out her drink when she asked that.

"Uh, no, we're not. We used to be, a long time ago."

"Why not now?"

"Well...we just drifted apart. I met the boys dad and he moved out to the city."

"You drifted back together though, right? Kind of like me and Mike?"

Joyce smiled, and nodded.

"We did."

"You should ask him to be your boyfriend." El said, grinning widely. Joyce chuckled.

"We'll see." They continued watching the movie. They got about halfway through another movie when El asked another question.

"Can I call Hopper dad?" Joyce looked down at the girl.

"Well, that's a question you should ask him, but I know he'd love it if you did." El grinned.

"The birth certify thing says he's my dad."

"Birth certificate." Joyce corrected her, but nodded. "Yeah, it does." El smiled. The boys came inside, followed closely by Max, Jonathan and Steve.

"When did you two get here?" Joyce asked Steve and Max.

"A few minutes ago. Dustin called me and told me to pick her up and come over." Steve said. Joyce chuckled. Dustin basically had Steve wrapped around his little finger.

"Ah, okay. Well, I'll go make some hot chocolate while we wait on Mike and Hopper." They all grinned and nodded as she went in the kitchen. Jonathan followed her to help her, knowing she puts way too much sugar in it. The kids joked around with Steve for a few minutes until Hopper and Mike finally walked in with a couple of bags in their hands.

"What do you have there?" Joyce asked, smiling at the two. Hopper explained while Mike joined the others, hugging and giving El a quick not so subtle kiss.

"We went to the store on the way back and got some candy canes for El, since we didn't get any last night, and a couple of ornaments that Mike thought she'd like."

"Awe, that's sweet."

"I also got you these, "He grabbed a bag of chocolate covered raisins and handed them to her. She smiled. They're her favorite.

"Thanks Hop." He grinned back at her. They went in the kitchen to talk while the others began putting ornaments on the tree, Joyce and El having already spread the branches out and put the lights on it. El was amazed by all the different ornaments, and would get frustrated when they didn't want to stay on the branch, so Mike helped her. Considering he could almost reach the top of the tree now, it wasn't that tall of a tree, she was just short, he put the ornaments where she wanted them.

"Did you have fun at the game?" El asked Mike, who looked over at her and nodded, smiling.

"It would have been better if it wasn't so cold. My ass was almost frozen to the seat." Her eyes widened at that. "Not really, El." He chuckled. "It's just a way of saying how cold it was."

"Oh." She smiled back at him. He stared at her for a couple of seconds, as she concentrated, trying to find an empty spot to put an ornament. He started to say something but was interrupted when a giggling, yes, giggling, Hopper and Joyce came into the living room.

"The tree is looking awesome guys!" Joyce exclaimed. El grinned and clapped her hands happily. Joyce winked at her from across the room, and she raised an eyebrow but shrugged.

"How do you think should have the honor of putting the star on the tree?" Jonathan asked.

"El." Mike pretended to cough in his arm. Everyone laughed at that. El grinned at him and then at everyone else. Joyce handed her the star and Hopper picked her up so she could put it on top. Everyone clapped as they admired the tree, and El hugged Hopper.

Around ten o'clock, Steve left, taking Dustin and Max with him to drop them off. Jonathan had gone in his room to work on a project, so Mike, El, Lucas, Will Hopper, and Joyce watched another

Christmas movie. During a particularly quiet part of the movie, Mike sneezed loudly, causing the others to jump. He sneezed again, his hair flying wildly.

"Oh God." He sneezed again and Lucas and Will started laughing.

"Bless you." Joyce said, chuckling.

"Thank *sneeze* you."

"Well, this is gonna go on for about ten minutes so we might as well pause the movie." Lucas said. Mike sneezed again as an answer. El just looked at Mike with the most ridiculous look on her face. He would have laughed if he hadn't sneezed again.

"I'm gonna *sneeze* go to the bathroom." He sneezed again and did as he said. He came back a couple minutes later, shaking his head. "I hate when that happens." Lucas snickered.

"I, personally, think it's hilarious."

12. Chapter 12

I figured I'd just add a little argument type of thing at the beginning of this chapter, because as you can see, Ted Wheeler is a complete dick. Plus El kinda sorta comforts Mike afterwards. I hope you guys like it!

Sorry for not updating sooner, there's been a lot going on at home, which, honestly, is some inspiration for Ted and his lazy ass. xD

Also, where I live, after the parade there's usually games and stuff like this afterwards. I don't know if it's anywhere else, so this is just stuff I see when I go to them :D (which is rare ha)

Sunday

"I don't understand, Ted. Why don't you ever want to spend time with us?" Karen asked her husband, who was sitting in his Lay-Z-Boy.

"I'm tired. And I don't want to go to some silly little parade. It's for children." Karen just shook her head and took Holly out to the car to put her in her carseat.

"Are you aware that you *have* children, *dad*?" Mike asked.

"Mike." He heard Nancy say, trying to get him to stay out of it.

"I mean seriously, you have kids, and you *never* do anything with us? I mean, what's the point of us even calling you dad?"

"Michael, you will not speak to me like that!"

"Or what? What're you gonna do? Ground me? Take away my bike? Go ahead, because I don't give a *shit*." Nancy was surprised, right along with Ted, because Mike usually tried not to curse in front of their parents. "But you know what? It's fine, because, it's not like you give a shit now, nor will you give a shit any other time. And another thing, how are you tired when you literally do nothing but sit your ass in that damn chair and watch the TV?" Mike then walked towards

the door, not even waiting for a response, and rushed Nancy out. As he walked out of the house, he slammed the door behind him as hard as he could. He joined his mom and sisters in the car, silently fuming. They're meeting everyone at town square, where the Christmas tree lighting and parade is. Nancy decided not to say anything to him, knowing it'd probably piss him off even more. See, the thing is, when Mike gets real mad, like he is now, he starts angry crying, which pisses him off even more. They parked as close to the square as they could and Mike almost immediately got out and made his way over to Hopper, El, Joyce, Will, and Jonathan. He was furiously wiping at his eyes as he walked.

"Mike!" El exclaimed excitedly when she saw him. He gave her a weak smile and waved. She frowned, noticing how sad he looked. Before anyone else had a chance to say anything to him, El grabbed his hand and walked him over to a tree a couple feet away from them. "What's wrong?" She asked.

"My...It's nothing, really. I'm okay, El."

"Friends don't lie, Mike." She said, giving him a look.

"I had another fight with my dad." He gave in and said.

"Did he say something to make you sad?"

"No, no, I just...I'm just an angry crier, I guess." She raised an eyebrow.

"Angry crier?"

"It's when you get so mad all you can do is cry, basically."

"Oh." She bit her lip. "I've done that." He just nodded. He wouldn't look at her so she put her arms around him and pulled him into a hug. He buried his face in her hair and hugged her back.

"What's up with him?" Hopper asked Nancy as she joined he, Jonathan and Will, who were sitting on the sidewalk. Karen was standing with Joyce, talking, probably about how much of an idiot Ted is.

"He kinda cursed our dad out." She said.

"Huh?" Hopper was surprised by that, because usually, Mike was a respectful kid and didn't do that, at least, around adults.

"Yep, but I don't blame him to be honest. He never does anything. Literally, nothing. Except sit in the chair and watch TV and eat. Or go to work, and he basically does the same thing there as he does at home. He said the parade is for children, and Mike called him out for it."

"What'd he say?" Will asked.

"He asked him if he was even aware that he has children." She said. "He even asked him what was the point of even calling him dad since he doesn't act like one."

"Wow."

"Damn."

"Well then."

"Yeah. I don't have the nerve to say something like that to him. Not even my mom."

"When I was that age, and I said anything like that to one of my parents, I'd get my ass beat." Hopper said. "But, I mean, I don't blame him either. I'd like to pop him one good time in the face myself." Hopper said, which caused the three to laugh.

"Mike?" El asked softly, still hugging him.

"Hm?"

"Be my boyfriend?" She asked sweetly, releasing him just enough so she could look at him. His eyes widened at that.

"Uh, uh…" He let out a nervous laugh, but nodded. "Yeah, I uh, I was going to ask you...Eventually." She smiled widely and pecked him on the lips quickly, hoping Hopper wouldn't see. He smiled back at her. "Um, we should probably go back over to them. They keep looking

back at us." She nodded and they let go, and she grabbed his hand. Hers are freezing cold, but his are warm. They walked back over to the small group, and El grinned at Joyce, who just grinned back at her.

"Hey, what's this?" Hopper asked, looking between the two.

"What?"

"Do you two have some silent conversation going on over there or something?" The two shrugged and said at the same time.

"No." He eyed them anyway, but turned his attention to Mike.

"Hey, kid." He held a hand out. Mike shook it and said,

"Hey Hop." Hopper could tell he'd been crying because of the redness of his eyes, but didn't comment on it.

"What time does this thing start?" He asked. As if on cue, music could be heard as the parade began. It was starting at the square, and then going through town. After the parade itself, there are games and different stands for food or drinks. Dustin, Lucas, and Max ran up to them, out of breath.

"Sorry we're late, my mom wouldn't let me leave until I found my gloves, which is why I have socks on my hands." Dustin said, holding his hands up to show them. They laughed. Everyone sat down on the sidewalk except for Mike and El, who stood behind Hopper and Joyce. Mike wanted to make sure she could see everything. She did, and she was amazed. She danced along with the music playing, and eventually had Mike dancing with her, which Jonathan made sure to record. When the parade was over, Jonathan and Nancy wandered off, which meant,

"Mike, could you take Holly to ride the ponies?"

"Mom!" He exclaimed. She gave him a pleading look and he sighed. He reluctantly let go of El's hand and bent down to Holly's level. "Wanna go ride a pony?" He asked. She nodded and gave him a sweet smile.

"Yeah!" He grinned and nodded. He stood up and picked her up, holding her with both arms. She's a heavy little thing, and normally, he'd just hold her hand, but she's known to wiggle her way out of his grip to run off.

"Hey Hop, can we go show the ponies to El too?" Mike asked, giving him the puppy dog eyes.

"Don't you even try to…" He looked at Mike and rolled his eyes. "One day, I'll be able to resist you kids puppy dog eyes. Yes, you can show them to her. Make sure she's in between someone at all times. And do whatever you want, I gave her some money, but be back here by the time they light the tree, got it?" Everyone saluted him, except Mike, because he currently had a giddy four year old in his arms. He ruffled El's hair and smiled at her. "Go have fun, kid."

"Thank you dad!" The kids then made their way towards the ponies.

"Dad, huh?" Joyce asked. She and Karen grinned at him. He grinned.

"Yeah, she asked me if she could call me that when we got to the cabin Friday night. I'm not gonna lie, I shed a tear or two when she did."

"Awe, Hop!" Joyce gave him a side hug, and he held her there when she started to pull away. Karen smiled at the two, but they noticed the sadness in her eyes.

"Are you okay, Karen?" Joyce asked. Karen chuckled.

"Not really, no."

"Do you two want to go inside where it's warm and get some coffee?" Hopper asked, gesturing to the little cafe that was still open. "And we can talk about it if you want to." They both nodded, and the parents went on their way, as the kids laughed at how excited Holly was riding the pony. El was kind of sad that she couldn't ride one, since she apparently weighed too much according to the guy running it, but she was happy with being able to pet them.

"Hey, maybe next year, when the fair comes to town, you can ride the horses they have." Will told her. She raised an eyebrow.

"Fair? Horses?" She looked at Mike for an explanation.

"Horses are just big ponies." He said. "They're taller. The fair is kind of like this, but bigger and has a lot of rides. It's fun."

"Yeah, if you like these types of things, you'll love the fair." Max told her. She grinned.

"It comes two weeks, I think, before school starts back in August." Will said.

"Can we go?" El asked.

"We usually go every year. We didn't this year, but hopefully this new year we will." Dustin explained.

"But if Hop says you can, then definitely." Mike told her. She grinned happily and nodded, reaching up to adjust her hat.

To be continued...

13. Chapter 13

Omg guys, right before I started writing this chapter, I saw a post on instagram that literally almost made me cry. It was when Hopper hugged Mike after Mike yelled at him and it said "This scene becomes even more emotional when you realize Hopper probably hugged Mike tighter than Ted Wheeler ever has."

Honestly, it does make it more emotional because of how much of a piece of shit Ted is and the fact that he literally acts like doesn't care. I hope in season three that he'll change somewhat and actually interact more with Karen and their kids. The post was from *the_upside_down11*.

So far, Mike hasn't been all that happy since El came back into his life, but I promise, it'll eventually change, but just a little heads up, it gets worse before it gets better. There'll be lot's of sad, moody, pissy Mike (Emo Mike) when it comes to his dad, and there's also a big plot twist in this chapter, and a lot of drama. It won't last the entire story, Mike will be happy again (for a while, at least)! I promise he will!

At one point, Mike managed to spot Nancy and Jonathan in the crowd and with a little convincing, they took Holly to go look at toys or something, he couldn't remember. He grabbed a hold of El's hand again, and the group of teens walked around the square, looking at the different games or mini-rides.

"What's that?" El asked, pointing at a bouncy house.

"It's a bouncy house." Mike explained. She raised an eyebrow.

"It's kinda like a trampoline. You can jump around in it." Lucas told her.

"Tramp-o-line?"

"Why don't we go and show her?" Max asked. They all nodded. Since

there were no little kids in there now, the person who was sitting at the opening let them all go in. They took their shoes off, which confused El, but she did anyway. They got in and started jumping. Surprised, she fell over and was bouncing all over the place on the floor. It felt weird to her, but it was fun. Mike, laughing, stopped jumping and helped her up. He held her hands and gestured for her to jump with him. She did and she grinned.

"I asked my mom for a trampoline for Christmas so hopefully I'll get it!" Dustin said loudly.

"I hope so. I love trampolines." Will said, jumping higher than everyone else.

"This is fun." El told Mike, who nodded in agreement. Mike then slipped, and took El with him. She fell on top of him, the two giggling. When they realized that El was on top of him, they blushed and managed to get up without falling back down. After about ten minutes of jumping and attempting to do tricks, they got out so other kids could get in. While they were putting their shoes on, Dustin said,

"Hey Mike?"

"What?"

"Isn't that your dad over there?"

"Huh?" Dustin pointed towards the funnel cake stand, and standing next to it talking to someone, was Ted Wheeler. He looked at the others, who looked just as confused as him. He stood up from tying his shoes and walked towards his dad. As he got closer, he noticed he had picked a little kid up, and for a second, he figured it was Holly, but it wasn't. He was holding the kid in one arm, and had his other wrapped around some woman, and there was a little boy standing between them. Apparently, they were getting their picture taken.

"What the hell?" Mike exclaimed, when he knew Ted could hear him. The woman gave him a look but he ignored her. "Who the hell is this? And what are you even doing here?"

"This is, uh, uh-"

"I'm his fiance. What's it to you, kid?" The lady asked. The look on Mike's face went from annoyed, confused, and then to anger as he realized what was happening.

"You sorry piece of shit!" Ted put the kid in his apparent *fiance's* arms and turned to Mike.

"Listen, Michael-"

"Don't you dare, *listen, Michael* me. I get it now. You never cared about us, never!" He pushed him. "You're nothing but a sorry piece of shit, and that's all you'll *ever* be. You're a great roll model, did you know that, *dad*?" He asked sarcastically. "You're a damn good example of a father."

"Mike-" Will tried to pull him away but Mike shrugged him off. People were crowding around them now, wondering what was going on.

"All these excuses as to why you never do anything with us is because you have another damn family." He turned to the woman. "I hope you understand the shit you're getting into. He'll do the exact same damn thing to you. He doesn't love you, or your kids. Hell, he's probably screwing around on you *already*."

"I'll have you know-" She started.

"Did I ask for your damn opinion? No, I didn't." Mike hissed. Her eyes widened and she huffed, taking the little boys hand and walking away.

"For a 12 year old, you sure do have a potty mouth on you." That one sentence is what pissed Mike off the most.

"I'm. Not. Twelve." He growled. "I'm almost fourteen, dumbass. Screw you and your *new* family. You, as far as I'm concerned, are *not* my dad. Not anymore. I hope you rot in hell, you son of a bitch." Mike was way too calm as he said this, and then walked away. Dustin looked at Ted and said,

"You really are a son of a bitch, you know that?" The group of teens followed Mike. Mike didn't know where he was going, he was too

pissed to see straight.

"Hey kid?" He heard Hopper say. He looked to his right and saw Hopper, Joyce, and his mom standing outside the cafe. They'd come out to see what was going on and witnessed the whole thing. Mike saw his mom in tears, and he knew. He knew that she's known about it for a while, just by the look on her face.

"Mike, sweetie, come here." She said gently, walking closer to him. Hopper looked at the other teens and gestured for them to go inside with Joyce. El argued with him but eventually went when he told her,

"He and his mom need to talk, in private for a few minutes." When she went inside, he went to go have a talk with Ted. Mike wouldn't look at his mom.

"Mike…" She put her hands on his shoulders.

"Mom, I...I'm sorry."

"Sorry for what? Don't apologize for anything, you did nothing wrong. I heard everything you said, and I hate to say it, but it's true." She squeezed his shoulders lightly. "I'm the one that should be sorry. I should have told you and Nancy. I shouldn't have kept this from you, or stayed with him. I just didn't want you guys to look at him differently. I know he hasn't been a good dad but I didn't want you to hate him. And if you hate me for not telling you, I understand-"

"Mom, don't say that." He shook his head. "I don't hate you. Nancy won't either. I wish I didn't find out that way but I did."

"I know. Come here." She held her arms out and he hugged her. She hugged him back tightly, running her fingers through his hair. "I know it's going to be hard, but do you think you can try and forget everything that's going on? Well, I know you can't forget it, but don't let it get to you. Try and have fun. At least until after the Christmas tree lighting, okay?" He nodded. "We'll talk more later, and I will talk to Nancy, I promise." He nodded again and pulled away from her, wiping his eyes with his sleeves.

"I'm gonna try and block it out. For you, Nancy, and Holly. And El, it's her first Christmas tree lighting and I don't want to ruin it even more." He said and gave her a small smile. She smiled back. His eyes widened for a second and said, "You know what El asked me?"

"What?" She pushed some of his hair out of his eyes.

"She asked me to be her boyfriend." He said, blushing.

"She did? That's awesome! It's about time!" She joked. He chuckled and nodded.

"I was gonna ask her...eventually." She smiled.

"I know you were."

14. Chapter 14

Like a bruise, Mike's gonna get worse before he gets better. Lot's of sad, pissy, just straight up heartbroken Mike in the chapters to come.

Karen and Nancy's talk will be in the next chapter, while Karen explains her conversation with Hopper to Nancy.

Also, thank you guys so much for your reviews on the last chapter!

MoEffect: Many more plot twists to come in the future, right along with an even more sassy Mike. All I'ma say is lots of tears to come ;) Also, thank you! I hope you like the next few chapters :D

walco007: I'm glad you're enjoying it! I binge watch them all the time haha. And thank you! It'll be up soon!

phieillydinyia: Yes, they are technically still married, but some people are really effed up. That post has actually given me a little inspo for this, but you'll just have to wait and see (or, technically, read xD). Ted is an idiot.

I'm gonna stop now, it's 4 AM, I'm tired, and these long ass A/N's are probably annoying af, but I hope you guys enjoy!

P.S. Thank you for over 92 follows, 56 favorites, and 45 reviews! It makes me so happy and I honestly appreciate it! :') Thank you! (Imagine a bunch of heart emoji's xD)

"This is gonna be a pretty dumb question to ask, but uh, are you okay Mike?" Dustin asked. The crowd had significantly become smaller in the last thirty minutes, mainly because most of the people there didn't have kids or didn't care to stay and watch the lighting of the tree. The group of friends and family were standing on the sidewalk, a good couple of feet from the tree itself. Nancy, who automatically knew something was up with Mike, tried to get him to talk, and then

Karen, who wouldn't tell her. Hopper had yet to come back from his little chat with Ted, and almost everyone was nervous after what happened with Mike and his dad.

"Good as I can get, I guess." Mike said with a shrug. El squeezed him a little tighter and he gave her the tiniest smile. It was relatively quiet after than that, other than the crowd around them talking. A few minutes before they lit the tree, Hopper came back and pulled Karen to the side and talked to her in hushed whispers. Mike gave them a look, silently asking them what they were talking about, when they came back but they both dismissed him.

"Is everyone ready?" A random person called. Everyone responded with either yes, hurry up, or just yelled. He counted down from three in lit the tree. The lights had a blueish tint to them, and it covered the tree, and there was a gold star at the top, but it didn't light up. Mike couldn't help but smile at the look on El's face. She smiled at him widely, rocking back and forth on her heels.

"Do you like it?" He asked her quietly. She looked back at him and nodded, the smile never leaving her face.

"Pretty." She replied.

"Yeah...really pretty." He said, not looking at the tree, but at her. Her smile grew bigger at that. She glanced down at his lips and then back up at his eyes. She leaned in and kissed him, and with that kiss, he forgot about everything that had happened tonight. All the bad things, if only for a little while.

"Ooh!" Dustin exclaimed. Everyone had seen it. Mike blushed and looked down, afraid that Hopper would kill him or something, while El just smiled widely.

"I'm so glad I got a picture of that!" Nancy exclaimed.

"Boyfriend, girlfriend, or no?" That's all Hopper and asked.

"Y-yes." Mike stuttered, his face turning and even darker shade of red.

"Remember what I said the other night?"

"Yes sir." He didn't stutter that time.

"Good." Dustin just started making jokes so Mike just looked down and covered his face with his hands in embarrassment. Don't get him wrong, he loved the kiss, but it was just that everyone was staring.

"Shut up dip shit." Max said, pushing Dustin. "It's cute."

"Did you just say cute?" Lucas asked.

"I will punch the both of you." She threatened.

"Nancy, take picture?" El asked Nancy, who nodded happily. El wrapped her arms around Mike, and he finally uncovered his face and wrapped his arms around her as well. Nancy took a picture of them smiling, and took another of El kissing Mike's cheek, causing him to grin the biggest grin he'd probably ever has. After hanging around the square for a little while longer, they all went to dinner, and no one spoke one word about what happened.

When everyone said their goodbyes and went their separate ways, the Wheeler's made their way home, and when they did, not only was Ted's car gone, but so was the majority of his stuff.

"Mom? What the hell is going on?" Nancy almost yelled, which scared Holly, who backed away from her. "I'm sorry Holly." She apologized. "I didn't mean to yell."

"Mike, Sweetie, can you put Holly to bed for me while I talk to Nancy about..." She didn't have to finish the sentence for him to understand. He just nodded and took Holly's hand to lead her upstairs. Having put her to bed many times before, Mike knew her routine like the back of his hand. He took her in the bathroom to brush her teeth and as she did so, he got her pajamas. When she was done, he got her in her pajamas and brushed her hair for her.

"Mikey?" She whispered as he was about to leave her room. He could hear his mom and Nancy talking downstairs, and wanted to go in his room and try to drown out the sound.

"Hm?" He hummed.

"Daddy gone?" She asked. He sighed quietly and went to sit on the side of the bed.

"I-Well, yeah, he is, Holly."

"Never see him again?"

"I have no idea." He told her honestly. *I hope not* he thought. "I'm sure you'll get to see him, Holly."

"Don't want to." She replied. He raised an eyebrow, surprised. "Mean. Too lazy." She said. "He doesn't like us." That was when he realized that she knew a lot more than anyone thought.

"It seems like it, Holls, but he does. He loves us."He told her, honestly. He didn't want to lie to her, but she's only four. Though it sure didn't seem true, but to Mike? The only thing really keeping him from screaming his lungs out is the thought that maybe, just maybe, he loved them at one point.

15. Chapter 15

"Why didn't you want Mike to talk with us?" Nancy asked as she and her mother sat next to each other at the dinning room table.

"Because he already knows and I don't want to get him even more upset than he already is." Karen told her. "I'm going to try and just be straight forward with you, and tell you that-"

"Dad has another family." She whispered. Karen's eyes widened. "I know, mom."

"H-How did you know?"

"I've seen them around and I put two and two together." She told her.

"Why didn't you tell me?" Karen asked, taking hold of her hands.

"I-I don't know, honestly. I know you knew, because I've heard you mention it before, on the phone with one of your friends."

"I'm sorry I didn't tell you, Nancy. I wanted to, and like I told Michael, I didn't want you guys to think of him any differently and I didn't want you to hate him."

"Oh trust me, I hate him for what he's done, but I love him, only because he's my father."

"And I completely understand. Um, how long have you known?"

"Since the first kid was two." She replied quietly. "For four years now."

"Oh my God." Karen rubbed her temples. "I'm so sorry I didn't tell you myself. I wish I had told the both of you. I wish I'd have took you two and leave, but if I did that, then..."

"We wouldn't have Holly." Nancy finished.

"Exactly. And with Mike... I wish he hadn't found out this way. He absolutely hates your father now."

"I wouldn't blame him one bit. I don't know what happened but Will and Dustin gave me a play by play during the tree lighting."

"Figures they would." Karen rolled her eyes playfully.

"Mom?" The two looked over to see Mike, standing at the base of the stairs, biting his lip like he did when he was nervous or upset.

"Are you okay? Come here." Karen motioned for him to join them at the table, and he just stood behind her chair as they both looked up at him. "What is it?"

"Holly, she um, she asked me if dad was gone." He said, playing with his fingers as he looked down at his feet.

"What did you say?"

"I didn't want to lie to her, so...I told her yeah. She asked if-if we'd ever see him again, and I told her I'm sure she would, and damn it, she knows a lot more than we ever thought, mom." She decided to ignore the curse word as she nodded for him to go on. "She said she doesn't want to see him again, that he's mean and too lazy." He kinda chuckled a bit at that, but continued. "She said that he doesn't like us. She's four, she isn't supposed to think stuff like that. I told her that he does love us, but mom, I don't believe it. Not one bit." Instead of getting emotional, it just made him angrier talking about it.

"Michael..." Karen put a hand on his arm.

"If he really loved us, why would he do this? Did he ever really love you mom? Because if he didn't, I swear he's lost the best thing to happen to him." Karen's heart swelled at the words. "Because you don't deserve an asshole like him. He doesn't deserve you, he doesn't deserve *us*." She stood up at the sight of tears falling down his cheeks and hugged him tightly. Nancy joined in and Mike hugged the both of them, trying his best to stop the tears.

"You're absolutely right, Mike." Nancy whispered. "He doesn't deserve any of us." The three stood like that, hugging each other, until Mike finally pulled away and wiped his eyes with his sleeves.

"I'm sorry. Just angry crying I guess. *Again*." He said, shaking his head

at himself.

"It's okay to cry, Michael." Karen said, patting his shoulder. "Let's go in the living room, I want to talk to you about what Hopper told me." The siblings nodded and followed their mom into the living room and sat on the couch on either side of her. "I'm sure you already know this, but we are getting a divorce. I'm going to be honest with you guys, we've been in the process of it for a couple of weeks now, I just didn't want to tell you, and not telling you blew up in my face."

"I don't care, I just don't want to be around him again." Mike said, shaking his head. "I've had enough of his sorry ass. Oh, sorry." He realized he cursed again and bit his lip. She just patted his hand.

"It's okay. And you won't have to see him again. That's what Hopper was telling me. He went and had a little *chat* with Ted, but he didn't give me exact details. He did tell me that you all probably won't see him again. I will, in court."

"Why? Just for the divorce?" Nancy asked.

"And for child support. Hopper knows a lawyer from the city that he's going to call and talk to, and apparently, he's good. He's going to help us out with that. The reason I've been acting kinda weird lately, is because I've been worried about how I would pay the bills when your dad finally leaves, I thought we'd have to move to stay with your grandparents-"

"What?" The siblings exclaimed in unison.

"That's not the case, we're not moving, I promise. The house is paid for, so we don't have to worry about that. Just the electricity, water, food, and other stuff for you guys. And with child support from your father, we won't have to worry about that. If I could find a good job to support you guys and stay here, I would, and I will try and find a job, but without the child support we won't make it, and I don't want to take you from your home." She told them, putting an arm around them.

"You don't have to explain yourself to us, mom." Mike said, leaning into her side.

"Yeah, he's never done anything else for us, he might as well do this."

"He's kept this roof over our heads-"

"Yeah but that's it, mom." Nancy said. "He's never done anything with us. Never to those father daughter dances, he's never, ever, done anything with Mike. He wouldn't even go to the game with him Friday, so Mike asked Hopper and he went." Mike nodded in agreement. "Hell, he never changed Holly's diaper when she was a baby. Mike knew how to change a dirty diaper when he was 10."

"I know, and I'm so sorry. I hate that he's never been a father figure to you." She began crying so they hugged her.

"It's *not* your fault mom." Nancy said.

"No, not at all. It's all him." Mike said, burying his face in her hair. She smiled a small smile. After a few more minutes, she finally sent them to bed with,

"It's late, and you two should get to sleep. We'll talk more tomorrow, okay?" The two nodded and hugged her goodnight and went upstairs together, silently.

"Night, Mike." Mike gave her a smile.

"Night, Nance."

16. Chapter 16

Warning (another long author's note XD). Also, sorry my responses to your reviews are a little late :)

walco007: Thank you! And I'm glad you like the long A/N's! :')

The best guest: If you're still reading, thank you! I'm glad you like it and you will definitely be seeing more of me in the future ;) haha.

Charity: (It wouldn't let me add your whole user idk why) Haha, Mike's not sick! Just has some inner demons right now.

MoEffect: Thank you! Haha the f-bomb will probably actually be said in the story more when they get older XD. And you never know, Mike could go crazy; sad, angry, you'll just have to wait and see :) I love interacting with you guys! I look forward to that the most! Other than writing, of course haha

phieillydinyia: I'm happy you love it! I absolutely love your story too! It's so good!

Guest: It honestly just depends on if I'm busy with school or family, or if I have writers block or something, which I've yet to get, thankfully (knock on wood xD). I usually try and stick with at least 1,000 words per chapter, because the shorter they are, the shorter the wait. They'll probably get longer as the story goes on :)

iAmCC: MORE FLUFF TO COME I PROMISE! TED WILL GET WHAT HE DESERVED, EVENTUALLY. THEY'LL BE HAPPY AGAIN SOON. STEVE WILL BE FURIOUS AND MIGHT THREATEN TO USE HIS BAT! Haha Than you so much!

Back to being semi-serious, would you guys be pissed at me if I took longer to update so the chapters will be longer? Say maybe a week or so? Either way is fine with me, it's whichever you guys want :) Just let me know!

P.S. A little Steve and Jonathan bromance in this chapter ;)

This is the earliest I've ever posted xD I usually upload between 1 AM and 4 AM and it's currently 7 PM hahaha.

And Steve being a mom.

Monday

"Mike, Sweetie, wake up." Karen said softly, lightly shaking Mike's shoulder. He made a weird sound and opened his eyes up slowly.

"What?" He mumbled.

"Do you have any tests or quizzes today in any of your classes?" He thought for a second, rubbing his eyes.

"No ma'am."

"Okay," She squeezed his shoulder lightly, "Go back to sleep, you don't have to go to school today." He didn't even try to argue, he just fell asleep as soon as his head hit the pillow. She went to Nancy's room to ask her the same question, whereas she got the same answer.

"We have them tomorrow through Friday." Nancy said groggily. "Same with the middle school. I don't know why they decide to have midterms the week before break." She rolled her eyes. Karen chuckled.

"I don't either, but go back to sleep. You don't have to go today."

"Are you sure?" She asked.

"Yeah, you two had enough drama last night, so I think you should just stay here and rest for today. I'm going to meet that lawyer Hopper was telling me about later today, after you two have gotten up. I need you two to watch Holly for me." Nancy nodded.

"Okay. I probably won't be asleep long. I don't know about Mike though, he hasn't been sleeping much."

"Huh?"

"You haven't noticed it, mom? He has bags under his eyes. Something's going on with him, and I think it's something other than just this mess with dad."

"N-no, I haven't noticed it. I've just been trying to find away to tell you guys about this that I haven't realized it. I'm such a bad mother." Karen said, covering her face with her hands. Nancy sighed and sat up, putting an arm around her mother.

"No you're not. You're a great mom! I couldn't ask for a better one. Everyone makes mistakes. No one's perfect."

"I know." It was quiet for a few seconds. "Okay, I'm gonna leave now and let you go back to sleep." Nancy laughed lightly and nodded, laying back down as Karen left the room, shutting the door behind her. She looked at the clock on the wall, and seeing it was usually the time when Lucas and Dustin come by to get Mike so she went outside to meet them.

"Hey Mrs. Wheeler. Where's Mike?" Lucas asked.

"He and Nancy aren't going to school today." She told them, wrapping her coat around her a little more. "We were up talking late last night and I don't think they'd be able to pay much attention in school today after last night."

"Yeah, plus Mike really needs some sleep. And some alone time, I think." Lucas told her, and Dustin nodded in agreement.

"Yeah, he's still all sad like he was before El came back. You'd think he'd be happier." Dustin said.

"Hm. Well, I'm gonna let him rest and I'm gonna talk with him. You two go on and get to school so you're not late."

"Okay, by Mrs. Wheeler!" The two said in unison and rode off on their bikes. She walked back inside, shutting the door gently, and sighed.

"Do you think we should have a talk with him too?" Dustin asked Lucas as they rode their bikes towards the school.

"I don't know man, you know how Mike gets. Like how pissy he was

when El was gone, and he hardly laughed or even smiled. He fell asleep three or four times in class last week. In Mr. Clarke's class. And that *never* happens."

"This is bad. We should talk to Max and Will and see what they think we should do." Dustin said, and Lucas nodded in agreement and the two sped towards the school.

"So what you're telling me, is Ted friggin' Wheeler, has a second family and left them last night?" Steve asked. Jonathan nodded. The two are at lunch, sitting on top of Jonathan's car. They'd basically become best friends, even after the love triangle between them and Nancy. "What the hell?"

"I know. Dustin gave me and Nancy a play by play last night and told us everything. According to Dustin, Mike was being sassy as hell and told this woman after she tried to talk, *Did I ask for your damn opinion? No, I didn't* and she walked off with the two kids. Will told us that Mike pushed him too, and called him a piece of shit. He even told this lady that he hopes she knows what she's getting into and that he's probably already screwing around on her."

"Hm, sassy little shit, isn't he?" Steve mumbled to himself, but then rolled his eyes. "Well damn, I'm glad he did. The kid has been through hell the last year because of his little girlfriend being gone, and she's come back and he and his friends almost get killed because of those damn demodog shits that Dustin talks about trying to save her and everyone else, and then his dad pulls this shit, and how long did you say he's been hiding this?"

"Over six years." Jonathan replied.

"Oh my God, if I had been there I'd have took that damn bat upside his old ass head. You don't do that. That bastard has no heart." He crossed his arms, fuming silently.

"Steve, you're being a mom again." Jonathan said, nudging him. Steve rolled his eyes.

"Oh shut the hell up. Like you're not pissed about it."

"I am, but I'm not threatening this kids father with a baseball bat with nails sticking out of it. You sound like my mom, because she's threatened people over me and Will." Steve couldn't help but chuckle at that bit. "When we got home last night, Will told me about how Mike has been different, almost worse than when El was gone. He tries to act all happy and stuff in front of everyone, especially El, him, Dustin, and Lucas can apparently see right through it, makes me wonder if they have some kind of powers or something."

"Oh God, we don't need another telekinesis kid around here." Steve said, sighing. "Well, they've been friends forever, haven't they? Like ten years or something?" Jonathan nodded. "Do you think we should try to talk to Mike? Maybe try and act like big brothers to him or something?"

"I don't know. We should probably talk to Nancy first, because we don't want Mike flipping out on us over it or anything. Or at least figure out what to say to him before we do." Steve nodded in agreement and the bell rang.

"Let's talk more later, I'll see ya man." Steve told him, giving him a little salute and running off to his next class.

17. Chapter 17

This chapter isn't all that happy, but there's a smiling/laughing Mike in it, so that's a plus...right? Mike and Nancy have a long conversation and Mike FINALLY tells her the truth as to why he's so tired and moody, but is that the only reason? Probably not ;)

By the end of this chapter, Mike is in no way, shape or form, completely better. At least, not yet. He will be soon. The rest of the group are going to have a talk with him, as well as Jonathan and Mom Steve xD, and probably Hopper too, because if you don't know already, Hop is gonna be a father figure to Mike, considering his actual piece of shit father was never a good father figure.

Anyways, let me stfu before I give out any spoilers for the next couple chapters xD

This chapter was over 1,500 words (not including this A/N haha) and next chapter will be longer :)

Hope you guys enjoy!

It was already a little past 12 o'clock when Mike finally got up, but he was still exhausted, but like usual, he tried to hide it. He did get more sleep than he had in months last night, so he was thankful for that. He scratched his head as he walked down the stairs and going into the kitchen where his mom was making lunch and Nancy was coloring with Holly.

"Well good afternoon." Karen joked. He gave her a rare smile, which kind of surprised her, but she smiled back at him.

"Hey Mike, do you know what test you have tomorrow?" Nancy asked. He sat down at the table across from her and thought for a couple seconds.

"Uh, English, why?"

"Oh okay, I can help you study later if you want. For all of your tests." She said. He nodded in thanks.

"Uh, mom?" Mike asked.

"Hm?"

"I um, I've been saving up my allowance for a couple weeks and I was wondering if uh, if you or Nancy could take me to get something for El?"

"Awe, of course, Sweetie!" She put their lunch down in front of them and sat next to him with her own. "What do you have in mind?"

"I have no idea. I was thinking a bracelet or a necklace with like, a waffle or something on it." He joked. She and Nancy chuckled, giving each other a look. He never jokes about anything anymore. "Or maybe an E for El. I don't know." He shrugged, taking a bite out of his sandwich.

"Well, we'll figure something out. I have to go meet with Hopper and his lawyer friend in, "She looked at her watch, "Thirty minutes, and it hopefully won't take too long, so when I get back we'll all go shopping. You need some new clothes too, your pants are getting too short." He raised an eyebrow at the lawyer thing, and then made a face about the pants as he looked down at his ankles, which were showing way more than they should.

"Oh." He looked at his mom. "True." The, now, family of four continued eating in silence, and when they were done, Mike offered to wash the dishes, which definitely surprised Karen. While he washed the dishes, Karen got her stuff together and hugged them all goodbye, promising that she wouldn't be gone long. When Mike was done in the kitchen, he joined Nancy and Holly in the living room, whereas Holly took after him and sat right in front of the TV watching cartoons. He plopped down on the other side of the couch, tossing his book bag, which he'd gone to get, on the ground next to him, not even making a move to get anything out of it. Nancy raised an eyebrow at him.

"What?" He asked. She smiled slightly.

"Nothing, nothing." She watched the TV for a few minutes and then finally turned to him. "Um, remember last year, when we promised each other that we would tell each other everything?" He bit his lip and nodded. "Well, you told me you didn't like El." She wiggled her eyebrows. He rolled his eyes, a blush creeping up his neck.

"You said you and Jonathan weren't together either so Ha!" She giggled at that.

"True, true. Anyways, I don't want to upset you or make you mad or anything, but I... I just feel like you're not telling me everything, Mikey." He resisted the urge to roll his eyes and sighed.

"Go on." He replied.

"Oh, well, um. You're always tired? And the other day Dustin said you fell asleep in Mr. Clarke's class. I can tell you're tired, and so can mom. Is there something else going on? I mean, I know with everything with dad sucks and isn't helping anything, but you haven't been the same since El disappeared, and now she's back, and you don't seem happier." He bit his lip as he looked at her. "I can tell you're faking a lot of your *happiness* when you're around her and everyone else. You never joke around or hardly smile. I miss your smile, Mike. I miss your cheesy jokes and your ridiculous faces like you made earlier." He didn't say anything for a couple minutes, he just bit his lip and stared at his hands in his lap. He took a breath and looked at her.

"I'm sorry." He stated. "I know you're worried about me. I *know*. I know mom is too, and I'm sorry I'm making you worry so much. I just... After last year and last month, I'm still kind of on edge. Someone else could go missing. Something else could happen. I have nightmares that you or mom or Holly, or anyone I love go missing or die and I wake up and I can't go back to sleep. I'm just scared that I'll loose everyone I love. I mean, we already lost dad's sorry ass. I don't like him but I love him, he is my dad, but I'm trying to forget him." He continued biting his lip for a few seconds before saying, "Last night was the first night I haven't had one in weeks."

"Oh, Mike... Why didn't you tell me? Or mom? Or anyone else. You know we'd try our best to help you." He sighed.

"I know. I just... I didn't want anyone to worry, but I guess that didn't work out like I planned."

"Look, Mike, you're my baby brother. I'm always going to worry about you, it's in the title as big sister, at least in my case. As Holly gets older, I'm positive you'll worry about her all the time and be the over protective big brother I know you'll be." She scooted closer to him and grabbed one of his hands. "And mom is definitely gonna worry about you. She's almost like Mrs. Byers when it comes to worrying," Mike chuckled at that. "See, there's that smile! Come here." She pulled him into a tight hug and he hugged her back, resting his cheek on her shoulder. "I know it's hard. It's *got* to be hard. I'm scared too. I'm scared that someone else will go missing, that you will, especially. But the gate is closed, and I'm hoping and praying that it won't open again,"

"Me too." He added and she continued after she nodded to his answer,

"I don't want to jinx it, so knock on wood," She lightly tapped her fist against his head and he couldn't help but laugh, and she laughed too, "but everyone is safe right now, and hopefully it stays that way. But Mike," She pulled away and looked at him, her hands on his shoulders and looked into his eyes, "If you ever, *ever*, have another nightmare, I want you to come to me, okay? I don't care how late it is. I don't care if I'm having the best sleep of my life, I want you to come and wake me up and tell me about it. Telling mom about my nightmares always made me feel better, and I think it might help you too." He nodded. "And talk to mom, too. She's worried. She thinks she's a horrible mom because she hasn't been able to help you."

"It's not her fault. Or yours, it's mine because I'm too stubborn to get help." He shook his head at himself. "I'm sorry, Nancy. I really am. I don't want to be a burden to anyone and that's all I have been. I've been a moody asshole to everyone. I need to apologize to them, too." She nodded in agreement.

"Yes, you do. I think you should talk to them too, especially El. That girl loves you so much and she doesn't even know it, and I can tell how much she hates seeing you tired or sad." His felt his cheeks heat up once again.

"Sh-She doesn't love me-"

"Mike, she does. She probably doesn't understand it, but she does. I can see it in her eyes and her face. She looks at you the way Mrs. Byers looks at Hopper." Mike snorted at that. "And you love her too, because *you*, little brother, look at her the way Hopper looks at Mrs. Byers, and that man loves her with all his heart, and anyone can see it." Mike bit his lip, his signature smile, one that she hadn't seen in over a year, on his face.

"I...Yeah, you're right." He said, sighing lightly. "I love her... I just...I don't know, I hear all these old people talking about how people my age aren't in love and that it's dumb to even have boyfriends or girlfriends-"

"Old people were born in different times, Mike. They have different opinions. Love is crazy, it doesn't matter how old you are, or how it happens. Anyone that looks at you two can tell you're in love." He blushed furiously and she smiled at his embarrassment. He bit his lip for the umpteenth time that day and hugged her again.

"Thanks, Nancy. We really need to talk more, because I feel a lot better. It's like some of the weight has been lifted off my shoulders after talking to someone about all this."

"You're welcome, Mikey. Any time you need to talk, don't hesitate to come to me, okay?" She felt him nod.

"And you can come to me too. I probably won't be able to say as much as you, but I can try. And if Jonathan is being an ass or something I'll beat him up for you. I may be skinny as a freaking toothpick but I'll beat his ass." She burst out laughing at that, causing him to laugh along with him.

"Ah, I love you, Mikey."

"I love you too, Nance."

18. Chapter 18

Anyone remember me talking about a spoiler for the *Stranger Things and IT* crossover from like 7 or 8 chapters ago? Well, here it is ;)

The name of the story is *Collision.*

That's all :) First chapter will probably be posted on January 1st and I plan on posting at least once a week (for the crossover, not this story, I'll still be uploading somewhat regularly xD). Each chapter will probably be about 2,000 words or so, it just depends. I would make them a lot longer but then there wouldn't be that many chapters, because I could probably write the whole story in about ten chapters, with 5,000+ words in each, but that would take longer sooo... Yeah! Anyway, here is a clumsy Mike, worried friends, and a mom Steve and bff Jonathan :D, along with Karen and Mike's talk.

P.S. all of the info on the divorce, alimony & child support is stuff my mom told me xD. I asked her all these questions and she was like wtf you wanna know this for haha. But she said she wasn't completely sure with certain bits so if it's not all completely right that's why :)

AND this is over 2,000 words YOU'RE WELCOME xD jk jk

It was about 2 o'clock when Karen finally got back home, which she immediately began apologizing for taking so long.

"It's fine mom, we had fun, right you two?" Nancy said, motioning towards Mike and Holly, who were stuffing cookies in their mouth. Mike nodded while Holly continued to eat her cookie. He was sitting on the floor with her, legs crossed under him, studying for his test tomorrow. Nancy motioned for her mom to follow her into the kitchen. "We had a long talk." She whispered to her. Karen raised an eyebrow. "I just straight up asked him what was up and why I was asking, and he finally told me. I'm not gonna say exactly, because he'll tell you, but it was a good conversation."

"Well good, I'm glad. I hope he'll come to me soon and talk to me."

"He will." Nancy gave her a smile and they went in the living room.

"What did the lawyer guy say?" Mike asked, looking up at his mom. She sat on the couch beside Nancy and motioned for him to turn around.

"Well, we have a court date set for this Thursday, and hopefully, next week the divorce will be final."

"What did he say about child support?" Nancy asked.

"Well, not only does he have to pay child support, but if everything goes to plan, he'll be paying me alimony as well." Mike raised his eyebrows, confused. "It's when either the husband or wife have to pay the other. It's ordered by the court. Because he cheated and got another woman pregnant, twice, he'll most likely have to pay it. He'll probably be paying child support as long as you three are in school."

"Does that include college?" Nancy asked. Karen nodded.

"Yes. It's not all confirmed yet, but the lawyer, his name is Bryan Weatherford, said there's a high chance of it."

"Dang."

"But I am going to get a job. Joyce offered to put a good word in for me at the store but Hopper actually asked me if I'd like to work at the station, like help Flo out with calls and paperwork."

"That'd be cool." Mike said, nodding as if agreeing with himself. She chuckled and nodded with him.

"He'd have to pay alimony until I get remarried, that is, if I do, and that's a big IF." Nancy nodded in understanding and Mike just shrugged, not knowing how to respond to that. "So! You two go get ready and I'll get Holly ready and we'll go shopping, how's that sound?" The two nodded and Mike got up, running up the stairs and tripping on the last step smacking the hell out of the ground, catching himself on his hands. Karen gasped and Nancy tried to hold back a laugh, rushing to make sure he was okay. He burst out laughing at

himself and let Nancy pull him up.

"I'm okay!" He said, looking at them through his hair, which was in his eyes. They shook their heads at him and laughed, and followed him up the stairs. Fifteen minutes later, they were ready to go.

"So, where to first?" Karen asked.

"Uh... I don't know." Karen chuckled at that and Nancy rolled her eyes.

"We could just start off at the jewelry store next door to where Joyce works." Karen suggested and he nodded. It was quiet for most of the ride, other than the music and Holly asking random questions every once in a while. Karen parked as close to the store as she could and they got out. When Mike got out, his wallet fell out of his pocket so he picked it up, only to drop it again, not once, not twice, but three times.

"Son of a bitch." He mumbled and Nancy snorted so hard it probably hurt. He glared at her and she continued laughing. They walked into the store, Mike opening the door and allowing his mom and sisters to go in before him.

"Ah, Mike! It's good to see you again!" The older man behind the counter said happily.

"Hi Mr. Martin." Mike gave him a smile. "This is my mom and my sisters, Nancy and Holly." He pointed at them and he gave them a smile and a wave at Holly.

"So, what are you looking for today my boy?" He asked.

"Um, something for my girlfriend." Mike said, his cheeks turning pink.

"You finally asked her, huh?"

"She um, she actually asked me. Uh, yesterday." He said, his face burning and he bit his lip.

"Awe! That is so cute!" Nancy cooed, poking at his cheeks. He glared

at her and slapped her hands away.

"Well, that's nothing to be ashamed of! I was too chicken to ask my wife to marry me so she asked me, and we've been married 46 years now." He said, chuckling. Mike grinned at that. "So, do you have anything in mind? Maybe another charm or two for her charm bracelet you and Chief got her?" Mike nodded, biting her lip.

"I was thinking of earrings too but then I realized she doesn't have her ears pierced, so maybe a necklace?" Mike asked.

"Ooh Mike!" Karen exclaimed quietly and he turned to look at her. "What is it you two say to each other all the time? Just promise, right?" She asked. He nodded and she motioned for him to come over to her. It was a plain necklace, just a silver chain, but the charm was the word *promise* in cursive. She hadn't seen a grin on his face that big in over a year, and she wanted to burst into tears at the sight of it. He looked back at Mr. Martin and nodded, the grin never leaving his face.

"I'll take it."

"Okay so why have you dragged us all to Will's house, exactly?" Max asked Dustin as she followed the three boys into the house.

"We're having a meeting about Mike." Lucas said. They sat on the floor around the coffee table.

"And?" She rolled her eyes.

"Something is up with him. He's been falling asleep in class and he's never done that." Will said.

"And he's still in a pissy mood." Lucas said, "Almost worse than when El was gone, and now she's back and he isn't happy."

"He hardly laughs or jokes like he used to, which was over a year ago. Even I can see that he's faking it around us and everyone else." Dustin said.

"Guys, hasn't this fighting with his dad gone on for a while now?"

Max asked and they shrugged.

"We don't know when it actually started, but he got especially pissy and moody around the beginning of August."

"The ass probably said something that's stuck with Mike. Who knows." She shrugged.

"You act like you don't give a shit." Dustin said, glaring at her.

"I do, actually. I've never seen him really happy, and he was a dick when I first joined the party. I want to see him happy just as much as the rest of you do, but what are we supposed to do? Set up an intervention or something? It'd blow up in our face and he'd probably hate us for bringing whatever's going on with him up." Lucas sighed and Dustin crossed his arms. Will didn't say anything, he just bit the inside of his lip.

"She has a point." Lucas said finally. "You guys know how riled up Mike can get. Like last night, I don't think I've ever seen him that mad, except for maybe when he found out about El and Hopper."

"I don't care how riled up Mike gets, he's our friend and we should help him somehow." Dustin said, and then, Jonathan and Steve walked in.

"What are you shitheads doing here?" Steve asked when he saw them. Will raised his hand slightly and said,

"I live here." Steve rolled his eyes and Lucas said,

"We're talking about helping Mike."

"Helping him? What do you mean?" Jonathan asked. They explained to the two.

"Hm, we were actually going to talk to Nancy but she wasn't at school, and then they weren't home when we went to their house. Which is why we're here." Steve said.

"Talk to her about what?" Will asked.

"About Mike, actually. We want to help him too, kinda act like big brothers to him or something." Jonathan said. "Because you and I both know the feeling of our dad leaving us." He gestured to Will, who nodded.

"And my parents are never home so I kinda get the gist of everything going on." Max gave him a weird look. "What?" She shook her head.

"What do you think we should do?" Lucas asked.

"Let us talk to Nancy first and see what she says." Steve and Jonathan said in unison and looked at each other weird.

"Uh, yeah. Anyways, I don't want you shitheads starting anything with Mike, got it?" Steve more or less demanded instead of asked. "We don't need him freaking out on us like he did Hopper, 'cause it wouldn't be pretty. Don't ask him any questions, don't talk about his dad, or anything that might trigger something." Everyone looked at him with various different faces. "I said, got it?"

"Uh, yeah, yeah. Got it." Will said first, and the others joined in.

"Good, now get your asses to work on studying, I know you have a test tomorrow."

After they left the jewelry store, with the necklace and a camera charm in hand, they went to various different stores for last minute Christmas shopping. Even though Christmas is in about two weeks or so, Karen usually had her shopping done by now. Plus she really needed to buy Mike some new pants and shirts, because both were getting too short on him. She already got him some new shoes for Christmas, dress shoes and regular shoes. They got hot chocolate and went to the bakery, and finally went home. Nancy went upstairs to her room to wrap a few presents she'd bought and Holly took her daily nap up in her room, which left Mike, curled up on the end of the couch watching TV, wrapping and unwrapping a loose thread on the blanket he had on top of him around his index finger.

"What'cha watching?" Karen asked, walking into the living room.

"The Year Without a Santa Claus." He replied. "It's going off though." He looked up at her. She sat down next to him and gave him a small smile.

"I hope you know that you can talk to me about anything, Michael." She said. "It doesn't matter what it is, you can talk to me, okay?" He nodded and he bit his lip. He'd been waiting for this and actually replaying what he was going to say in his head.

"I'm sorry for making you and Nancy worry." He started, looking at his hands. "I've seen the looks you've given each other today because I seem happy, and I am, mom. Today I'm happy. I had fun with you guys." She took his hands in hers and squeezed them gently, silently telling him to go on. "I haven't been happy, and it's not just because of dad. Like I told Nancy earlier, which I'm sure she's told you about, after last year and then this year, I've been on edge. I'm still on edge. I'm scared, scared that everyone I love or have ever loved will be taken away, that something worse would happen." He sighed and pinched the bridge of his nose, so she wrapped an arm around him comfortingly. "I haven't been sleeping good, for months now, because of these nightmares I have. They're just so... so real. It's like it really happened and I wake up and I freak out but I try to suck it up." *That's what dad would always say*, Mike thought. "So I didn't tell anyone. El doesn't even know. They started off happening every once in a while, and then they started happening more until it was every night. Last night was the best sleep I've had in weeks." Karen pulled him into a tight hug, bursting into tears. He hugged her back, almost in tears along with her.

"I'm so sorry, baby. I'm so sorry." She ran her fingers through his hair. "I wish I had known that you were going through so much. I would have done something, anything to see you happy again. And I still will. If you have anymore dreams, I want you to wake me up and talk to me. I don't care what time it is. It can be 4 in the morning for all I care. I want to know about all of your problems, like at school or if you had arguments with your friends. I want you to tell me everything from now on, Mike. Everything that's hurting you. I want to help you so, so much." She cried as she spoke, and he hugged her tightly, his own tears falling as she talked.

"I will, mama." He almost whispered. He hadn't called her *mama* since

he was 10. "I'm sorry for hurting you."

"No." She said, pulling back and lightly pushing hair out of his eyes and putting her hands under his chin to make him look at her. "Don't apologize for anything, baby. You didn't do anything wrong. Nothing. All I want from you is the truth from now on, okay? I don't care how bad it is." He nodded, reaching up and wiping his eyes with his sleeves. She reached over him and grabbed a couple of tissues off the table next to the couch and handed him one. He gave her a smile in thanks and blew his nose as she dabbed under her eyes. He hugged her again.

"I love you, mama."

"I love you too, Mikey. So much."

19. Chapter 19

I'm sorry it's mainly just been Mike and his family! There will be more with everyone else and in about a chapter or two, it will just be El and Hopper for the most part, and maybe Joyce! There'll be Mileven next chapter, I promise! And El will be in it a lot more soon, I swear!

Also, sorry it's so short compared to last chapter! I wanted to post this before I go to bed lmao. It's Finn's birthday today! I can't believe he's 15!

Friday

It was four days before anyone said anything to Mike, and when they did, the were shocked to hear him apologizing to them and explaining to him what's going on with him. Over the last few days, he'd slowly been going back to the old Mike, a little older, but just as silly and happy as he used to be. He would still have his moments, which, according to Jonathan after Nancy told him what was going on, would happen for a while.

They were in Mike's basement watching a movie, waiting on Hopper to bring El over, when Mike brought it up. He paused the movie and turned to them.

"So, I uh, I'm kinda surprised you guys haven't like, pushed me away and gave up on me after the last year, so I want to say thanks for that," He started, "And that I'm sorry for the way I was acting and treating you guys. Especially you Max, I'm sorry for being such an ass when we first met. I was upset about El being gone but that's no excuse, so I'm sorry." She gave him a smile.

"It's alright Mikey Boy." He gave her a weird look at that and she snorted. He chuckled but then continued.

"I, uh, I haven't been sleeping, which you guys could probably tell, and it's because of these nightmares I've had. I know I can't be the only one having nightmares after everything, especially you, Will." He gestured to him and Will gave him a small nod in agreement.

"Yeah, I have a lot of nightmares but I don't have them all the time thankfully." Will told him. Mike bit his lip.

"That's how mine started, and I'm not saying yours will do what mine did, I hope they don't, because for the last couple weeks I haven't had a good nights sleep without a dream. Sunday night was the best sleep I've had in a long time, and I haven't had another nightmare since I talked to Nancy and my mom." He didn't say anything for a couple minutes after that so Lucas said,

"Is that what all this is about man?"

"Have you just been grumpy because you can't sleep?" Dustin asked. Mike shook his head.

"No, no, I'm still on edge after last year and last month, and I know everyone else has to be." He wasn't going to admit that he was scared, not to them. "I just have this weird, weird feeling that something else is gonna happen, you know? And the bull shit with my dad definitely didn't help, he helped make it worse. And like I told my mom, I see the looks you give each other because I seem happy, and I am. I'm getting happier with every day, and I probably won't ever be the same as I used to be, but I don't think any of us will be."

"I'm definitely on edge still." Dustin said. "I hear random shit and it scares the hell out of me. I think all of us have a feeling that something is gonna happen." He looked at the others who nodded.

"Yeah. The gate's closed but if El could open it, other's like her could too, but hopefully that won't happen." Will added.

"And if something does happen, we'll probably have a year to prepare, because if something actually happens, it will probably be in a year, especially if this pattern keeps going." Lucas said.

"Yeah, let's not jinx it huh?" Mike said, giving Lucas a look. The others burst out laughing and he laughed with them.

"Dude, that wasn't even that funny, it was just the face Mike made." Max said, fanning herself. Mike rolled his eyes.

"But in all seriousness, we're here for you Mike." Will said.

"Yeah man, if you need someone to talk to you can call us or radio us on the super com."Lucas added.

"Thanks guys. It means a lot." He smiled at them, and Dustin pulled him into a hug, whereas the other three joined in for a group hug, which made Mike laugh but hug them back.

"Michael!" Karen yelled from upstairs.

"What?" He yelled back.

"El and Jim are here!" She yelled. They got up and ran upstairs, Mike tripping on the last step, falling into the hall way, causing the others to fall on top of him. Meanwhile,

"Do you have anything for burns?" Hopper asked Karen.

"Probably, why?" She asked. He nodded towards El, who had a bag over her shoulder with extra clothes in it. Karen and Mike managed to convince Hopper to let her spend the night with them, only as long as the she and Max stayed in Nancy's room.

"This one here wanted to try cooking with me today, and burned the crap out of her wrist. I don't know how it happened, but she won't stop complaining about it." El glared up at him and stuck her tongue out, which he did right back at her. El took the rag she'd been holding on it off and held it up to show Karen.

"Ouch, it got you good, huh?" El raised an eyebrow. "Figure of speech." She explained and El nodded. Then there were a couple thumps, a scream, a grunt, laughter and a string of cuss words coming from the hall way, where everyone except Will were laying in a pile on the floor. Will was laughing at them.

"Not freaking cool you asshole!" Dustin yelled.

"Mike, why the hell did you have to trip!" Lucas exclaimed, rolling off of Dustin when Max got off him.

"It's not my fault I have big ass feet and can't walk up the stairs! Get off Dustin!"

"Language boys!" Karen exclaimed, she, Hopper and El looking at them. Mike looked up at her grinning.

"Sorry mom." He said, rolling over and excepting the hand that Hopper held out to him, considering his friends had walked away from him. "Thanks."

"Uh, you got a bit of um, blood here." Hopper pointed at his own mouth. Mike looked in the mirror and saw a tiny bit of blood dripping from his bottom lip.

"Awe man!" He groaned. "I bit my lip when I fell." He explained. El waved at him cutely and he couldn't help but smile. He held out an arm and hugged her, whereas she went back in the kitchen to grab a paper towel. The others followed and the boys went in the living room and Max stayed with Mike, El, Karen and Hopper. El wet the paper towel and stood in front of Mike, wiping the blood off of his mouth. Hopper rolled his eyes at how the two stared at each other whilst Karen awe'd and Max smiled. They were just about to kiss when Hopper coughed to get their attention.

"Listen, kid, you know the rules." He told El, "And so does Mrs. Wheeler, so don't try anything stupid, got it?"

"Got it." He pointed to Mike.

"She sleeps in your sisters room."

"I know, yes sir. Of course." Mike nodded immediately. Hopper nodded.

"Let's go take care of that burn, Sweetie." Karen told El, who nodded and followed Karen upstairs after hugging Hopper goodbye. Max then joined the boys in the living room, leaving Mike and Hopper.

"Hey kid, put your jacket on. I wanna talk to you outside for a minute." Hopper told him. Mike nodded and grabbed his jacket and followed him outside in just his socks.

"Am I in trouble or something?" Mike asked.

"No, you haven't done anything wrong...Yet." He gave Mike a look,

and he raised his hands up in surrender.

"I haven't done anything." He stated. Hopper chuckled.

"I just wanted to check on you. You know, make sure you were feeling better and all. You know, El doesn't shut up about you when we're at the cabin. I like you kid, but Lord I know everything about you that she knows." Mike laughed at that. "And it's getting kinda old, her retelling me stories of last year, so how about tell her more about you, okay?" He laughed again and nodded. Hopper was surprised, Mike was genuinely laughing, possibly for the first time since Hopper's known him. He bit back a smile and clapped Mike on the back. "If you ever need anything, just call the station or radio me. You know what channel it is."

"Yes sir."

"If you ever need to talk, about anything, let me know. It doesn't matter what."

"Thanks, Hop. I will." Hopper ruffled his hair and started walking to his truck.

"I'll be here to pick her up say... around five tomorrow afternoon?"

"Yes sir, that's fine." Mike waved to him as he left and went inside where it was warm. He sighed, now all he had to do was talk to El and explain to her what's going on with him.

20. Chapter 20

MERRY CHRISTMAS! I know it's literally not even Christmas anymore but oh well. Six (6) days until Chapter 1 of Collision is up (IT & ST crossover)! I got a new computer, makeup, clothes, and jewelry! What did you guys get for Christmas?

After Karen took care of El's burn, the party went back into the basement to play games and watch movies, whereas Nancy joined in on them and Karen ordered pizza.

"How'd it go with your mom in court?" Dustin asked, a mouth full of pizza. Mike rolled his eyes at his lack of manners. He looked at Nancy who started explaining.

"He has to pay child support until we're done with school, which includes college, and alimony until mom gets remarried, that is, if she does."

"And she said it's a big IF." Mike said, pointing his pizza at a random person. "And frankly, I'd be perfectly fine if she didn't." He took a bite out of it and didn't say anything else about it. He didn't see the pitiful look Nancy gave him, which she was thankful for.

By 10:30, Dustin was snoring on top of his sleeping bag, instead of in it, Will was asleep in his, and Lucas and Max were sitting on the floor in the corner of the room talking, and Nancy, El, and Mike were sitting at the table, Nancy showing El baby pictures of Mike as he just rolled his eyes. Around 11 o'clock, Max and Nancy went up stairs, with El promising she'd be up in a few minutes.

"Want to talk to Mike. Privacy." She said. Nancy raised an eyebrow at Mike who flipped her off and she laughed, walking up the basement stairs with a giggling Max behind her. Mike and El followed them as well, only going into the living room instead of upstairs and sitting on the couch. Once he was sure Nancy and Max were in Nancy's room, Mike looked at El, who had a guilty look on her face.

"What's wrong?" He asked. She bit her lip, a habit she's gotten from him.

"I'm sorry for being nosy." She said innocently. He raised an eyebrow, confused.

"What do you mean?"

"Hopper calls me nosy when I go into the void." She explained, but that still didn't answer his question. "I can see who I want, when I want." She continued and he put two and two together and figured that she's probably been spying on him.

"So you've been spying, huh?" He joked lightly. She smiled slightly then frowned.

"Yes. I'm sorry." She said guiltily. "I saw you talking to Nancy and your mama." She told him. He nodded, biting his lip, much like she was doing.

"So you know everything that's been going on with me?" He asked softly. She nodded, kind of leaning away from him in case he flipped out on her. "I'm not mad at you, El." He said, grabbing her hand. She perked up a little.

"You're not?" He shook his head.

"I was going to try and talk to you while you were here." He said, "But now I don't have to since you already know. I'm sorry I didn't tell you sooner."

"It's okay, Mike. I'm not mad too." She said, and he smiled, she still needed a lot of work on her grammar but he thinks it's cute. She smiled back at him. There was a comfortable silence for a couple minutes, that is, until El heard him sniff. She looked up at him and saw a few tears falling down his cheeks. She reached up and put her hand on his cheek gently, and he looked at her. "What's wrong?" She asked the same question he had moments before.

"I...I don't know." He shrugged. "I-I just, I know it's been over a month since you've come back and I just can't believe you're really here. I thought you were dead, El." He swallowed. "I g-guess after you coming back and leaving again to close the gate and all the emotions I'd felt over the year are just now getting to me." He shook his head

at himself, silently cursing himself. "I'm sorry."

"Don't be sorry. It's okay to cry." She said. She pointed at her shoulder. "Shoulder to cry on if you need it. Always." He couldn't help but smile through the tears that started falling faster. She hugged him and he rested his cheek against her shoulder, and she squeezed him comfortingly. He let himself go, almost sobbing, in her arms. He refused to do it in front of anyone else but her. He could feel relief flooding through his body as he let out the year full of unshed tears. She rubbed his back, something she learned from Joyce, which was meant to be a comforting movement. The two stayed that way for a few more minutes and Mike finally pulled away, wiping at his eyes. "Feel better?" He let out a breath and nodded.

"So much better it's crazy."

Karen woke up around seven in the morning. Why so early? She had no idea, so she got up and went downstairs to get a glass of water. Before she made it to the kitchen, she saw one of the sweetest things. Mike and El were cuddled up on the end of the couch, asleep. Their legs were tangled together and El's head was resting on Mike's shoulder. She couldn't help but smile at the cuteness, and then giggle a little at the thought of Hopper seeing them. He'd have a cow. Apparently, her giggle was loud enough to wake El up. She blinked a couple of times and looked around, jumping when she saw Karen standing there. Mike groaned, sinking deeper into the couch. He was on the inside, and El was on the outside.

"I'm sorry, Sweetie. I didn't mean to wake you up." Karen whispered.

"It's okay." El whispered back. "Light sleeper." She got up with as little movement as possible.

"You don't have to get up, Sweetie."

"Have to pee." El said matter of factly, walking past her. Karen chuckled and grabbed a blanket to drape over Mike, who was snoring lightly. She kissed his forehead and went in the kitchen to get her a cup of water. She got one for El too, who sat next to her at the table.

"If you don't mind me asking, how in the world did you two end up down here together?"

"Mad?" El asked innocently. Karen shook her head.

"No, I'm not mad." She gave her a smile and El smiled back.

"After Max and Nancy went to bed we talked. Wanted privacy from the other boys." She said. Karen raised an eyebrow. "Mike cried."

"He cried? Why?" Her motherly instincts kicked in then. "Did he have another dream?" El shook her head.

"I told him I was spying on him."

"Spying?"

"In the void." She said. Karen sort of knew what that meant, thanks to Mike's explanation. "He told you and Nancy about his dreams. I saw him. He said emotions for the year hit him at one time." She tried to explain. Karen nodded in understanding. "Gave him a shoulder to cry on. He cried for a few minutes." Karen smiled at her innocent explanation. "He said he feels better now."

"Well good, I'm glad. Thank you, El."

"For what?"

"For being good to my boy and taking care of him."

"I like Mike." She said, smiling. "He's my favorite." Karen smiled. A look of realization crossed her face and she gasped quietly, "Don't tell him I said that. Or the others." She said urgently. Karen chuckled.

"I'm pretty sure everyone knows his your favorite, Sweetie."

"He's my favorite person ever." She whispered. "In the world." Her cheeks turned pink. "Stomach feels weird when I see him. Or talk about him." Karen raised an eyebrow, a knowing smile forming on her face.

"Do you feel sort of nervous around him?" She asked and El nodded.

"That, Sweetie, is love."

"Love?"

"It means more than *like*. It means you'll do anything for that certain person, and Mike is that person."

"I...love...Mike?" She asked. Karen smiled and nodded. El grinned. "I love Mike. Don't tell him." Karen chuckled.

"I won't but you should."

"When?"

"Maybe on his birthday?"

"When is his birthday?"

"Next Sunday, the day before Christmas Eve."

"Birthday present?" She asked hesitantly. Karen smiled and nodded.

"Birthday present."

21. Chapter 21

dj-santa: Thank you! :)

iAmCC: That's awesome!

phieillydinyia: Lmao Thanks girl xD

Skandal: Thank you! And hi!

The boys didn't get up until about 10:30 so the girls just sat in the kitchen talking, that is, until they heard a thump and,

"Son of a bitch!" Mike exclaimed. They all looked into the living room to see him laying on the floor.

"Michael!"

"Sorry mom!" He lifted his head to look at her and let it fall back on the floor. Karen shook her head at him, a small smile on her face. He eventually got up and joined them in the kitchen.

"I don't know how I haven't given myself a concussion yet." He said. Karen raised an eyebrow at him. "I smacked the crap out of the floor when I fell, I fell going up the stairs twice this week, and I can't even get in Hopper's truck without hitting my head." He explained. She shook her head once again, the smile still on her face.

"You're getting tall, that's why. You're my height now." He grinned at that but she pouted. He just laughed.

Hopper arrived at about 4:30 instead of 5 like he said, but instead of leaving then, El somehow managed to convince him to play in the snow with them. Jonathan had come to get Will and Steve was there to pick Max and Dustin up like usual to take them home.

"Never had a snowball fight." She told him, giving him a pitiful look. He sighed and looked at Mike, who shrugged as innocently as he possibly could.

"Fine." He drug the word out as if he was annoyed, but he really wasn't. She smiled widely and insisted that she pick the teams. It was Steve and Jonathan, Nancy and Dustin, Lucas and Will, her and Max, and finally, Mike and Hopper. No one had a clue why she chose the groups she did but didn't question it.

"Hey! What the hell? Who said you could hide behind the truck?" Dustin yelled from the other side of the yard.

"No one said we couldn't!" Mike yelled back, grabbing the snowball Hopper held out to him and threw it at Dustin, knocking his hat off his head. Of course, El and Max were winning because El was a *cheater* as Dustin had childishly called her. Soon, it was just Mike and Hopper against El, and she had two snowballs floating in front of her, a devious smile on her face. Everyone watched them, entertained.

"You really think she'll do it?" Hopper mumbled to Mike, who kind of nodded, then shook his head, and nodded again. "Oh come on, El, you wouldn't throw snowballs at your old man and boyfriend-"

SMACK!

"Well then." Everyone roared in laughter at the two, who had gotten a snowball each to the face.

"I was terribly wrong." Hopper said.

"Did you get that, Jonathan?" Karen asked, having come outside with Holly just a few minutes prior.

"Yes ma'am." He said, chuckling.

"Good."

"Oh my God!" Mike yelled. "What the hell! I'm gonna kill you!" He exclaimed, running after his laughing older sister. He did some weird dance as he ran, like he had ants in his pants.

"She put snow in his underwear." Lucas said, giggling. Mike slipped and fell in the snow and got up again, ran a few feet, only to fall again, then fall attempting to get up. Soon, he just gave up and laid in the snow, making snow angels, all by himself while the others

laughed. Hopper walked over to him.

"You okay kid?" He asked, chuckling. Mike was red faced and grinning from ear to ear. He nodded. Hopper held a hand out for him to take, and he took it. Hopper pulled him up and Mike dusted himself off, picking up a handful of snow and packing it as tight as he could. He threw it as hard as he could and hit Nancy in the back of her head. She put her hand where it hit and turned and gave him a death glare. He gave her a smug grin as he walked over to them, Hopper following him.

"What? All's fair in love and war."

Everyone left after having hot chocolate, and of course, El was reluctant to leave, but Hopper had a surprise for her at the cabin, so she willingly agreed to leave. She kissed Mike goodbye and hugged his mom and sisters and left with Hopper. Mike waved at her as she left, and walked back inside to see his mom giving him a look.

"What?"

"Nothing."

When they got back to the cabin, El immediately looked around for her surprise and he chuckled, shaking his head.

"Sit at the table and I'll get it." He said. She nodded, her leg bouncing up and down. He went in the cabinet and pulled out a green box. He set it on the table and she looked at it weird.

"What is this?" She asked.

"This is a gingerbread house. Like in the movies." Her eyes widened and she grinned widely. "Me and you are going to decorate it today. The smile didn't leave her face as he opened the box and pulled everything out. There were many different candies and pieces of the house, and two packets of icing. She watched him curiously as he ripped open the pack of cookies and set them on a piece of cardboard that came with it. He handed her two of the pieces and she looked at them confused. He smiled and grabbed a pair of scissors, cutting the

corner off both packets and handing one to her. "Okay so just watch what I'm doing, okay?" He asked and she stood up to watch him. He put a square in the middle of one of the pieces he had, and it looked like a window so that's what she assumed it was. Then he put a couple of candies on it like it's a windowsill. "You basically just do that, but you can put whatever you want on it." He told her. She pointed at the box.

"Can it look like that?"

"You can do it like that, yeah, but it doesn't have to be the same as on the box."

"On the box it's pretty." He chuckled and nodded.

"Go for it, kid."

Despite the fact that she's never done *anything* like this, her side of the gingerbread house looked a lot better than his did, which she found hilarious. After they decorated each piece they let the icing harden and then put it together, and Hopper took pictures of it, and then a picture of her sitting in front of it grinning.

"You did good, kid. It looks great." She stood up and hugged him. He was shocked, but happy nonetheless and hugged her back.

"Thanks dad."

"You're welcome, kid."

22. Chapter 22

If you can't tell by this chapter, this story is gonna have a good bit of singing and music in it xD. I just want to add it in since a lot of the Stranger Things cast are musically inclined. :D

Monday

"What're you doing, kid?" Hopper asked, standing behind El, who was at the table with paper and crayons.

"Drawing a picture for Mike. His birthday is Sunday." She said.

"He was almost a Christmas baby, huh?" She grinned at him and nodded.

"Draw one with me?" She asked.

"I don't know, I'm not that big of a drawer-" She ignored him and pushed a couple of pieces of paper into his chest and handed him some crayons. He chuckled and sat across from her. "What should I draw?"

"You and Joyce." She replied, concentrating on her picture. He raised an eyebrow.

"Why me and her?"

"Because you love each other." She replied. "Saw you two kiss under the toe thing." He was shocked at that, but then he laughed at her explanation.

"Mistletoe, El." He corrected her, chuckling. "So, you saw that, huh?" She nodded, smiling at him. The two sat in silence for a few minutes, swapping colors every once in a while. When Hopper was done, he held it up for her to see. He drew two people, not really stick figures, but not very detailed at the same time, standing on a hill with a sun in the corner. She gasped at the words he'd written on it. *Will you be mine?*

"Does that mean boyfriend and girlfriend?" El asked. He smiled and

nodded at her. She clapped excitedly, a wide smile on her face. She held up her picture. She'd drawn two stick figures and wrote their names underneath them, with a heart between them, and *I love you Mike* in big, red letters at the top, with different colored hearts all around it. He smiled at that.

"It looks good!" He complimented. "Mike will love it." She smiled at him widely. She put it down and looked at him.

"Can we build a snowman?" She asked. He chuckled and nodded.

"After we do, we're gonna go shopping with Joyce." She nodded excitedly, running to her room to get her jacket, scarf, gloves and hat. She came back as he was putting his hat on. He chuckled at her excitement and the two went outside to make a snowman.

In the end, they'd made a snow-Hopper and a snow-El, in which she was thrilled. They'd collected a bunch of rocks and sticks, and Hopper even had some carrots. They admired their work go a few minutes before leaving to meet Joyce at the square, where they would be doing their shopping at a clothing store.

"You excited to go shopping?" Joyce asked El, who nodded excitedly while Hopper just rolled his eyes. He walked behind the two, them filling his arms up with clothes. He was, in fact, grateful it was just shirts, pants, skirts and dresses instead of bras and underwear, considering Joyce and Nancy had already taken care of that, weeks after she closed the gate. They were about to go pay for the clothes when El saw something interesting in the boys section, and made a beeline for it.

"What'cha got here, kid?" Hopper asked as she held up a black and white stripped sweater.

"For Mike." She said matter of factly. "For Christmas." He looked at Joyce, who shrugged, a small smile on her face.

"Well, add it into the pile. Is that the right size?" He asked. El showed Joyce the tag and Joyce nodded.

"It will probably be a little big on him, but he'll grow into it." El

grinned widely and tossed it over Hopper's shoulder.

"I might as well find him something too." He said, winking at El, who grinned. They looked around for a while until he found a section of toboggans. One that caught his eye was a burgundy one with *Hawkins* in white letters on the front. He grabbed it and showed it to Joyce and El, who both smiled at it. Mike had actually talked about getting one but thought it'd be dumb. "Well, you girls ready to go?" He asked. They nodded and finally went to check out. After putting the clothes in Hopper's truck, he said, "Where to next? What do you girls want for lunch?" They both shrugged, and after a few minutes of arguing, they settled on the usual restaurant they go to, and got their usual order.

Wednesday

"I just thought I'd let you know that we aren't having our annual Christmas Eve party this year." Karen said that night during dinner.

"We aren't?" Mike asked sadly.

"Why?"

"I don't think having both sides of the family will be a good idea, Nancy."

"But..." Mike was actually looking forward to it for once, because El would be there.

"I know you wanted El to come, Michael, which is why we are having a small party, with just your friends and their parents." She smiled at the grin on his face. "But I there's just one condition." She said.

"What?"

"You and your friends are gonna have to sing for us." She said, smiling a devious little smile. Mike groaned.

"Ugh, why?"

"Because you four haven't sung since you were eleven..." He raised an

eyebrow. "No pun intended." He snorted at that and Nancy couldn't control her giggles.

"I don't know, mom. I'll have to talk to them about it." He said, biting his lip.

"At least one song, Mikey. Please?" He sighed.

"Fine, but only one song! Can they come over? Because we would have to practice you know." He said, giving her a look. She sighed, a small smile on her lips, and nodded. He got up and ran to the phone to call them. Lucas came right over considering he lived the closest, and Will and Dustin showed up at the same time.

"So we're singing together for the first time in three years, huh?" Dustin asked, wiggling his eyebrows. Mike rolled his eyes but nodded.

"Nancy can play the piano!" Karen called.

"What?" Nancy exclaimed. She looked at the four boys, who gave her the puppy dog eyes. "Ugh, I hate you guys. Hurry up and figure out what you're gonna sing so I can practice a little."

"Nah, you love us." Will said, grinning. She rolled her eyes.

"How about *Away in a Manger*?" Lucas suggested.

"I don't know, I kinda wanna do *Santa Clause is Coming to Town*." Dustin said.

"Yeah, that's Holly's favorite song." Mike said.

"El likes *Go Tell It On The Mountain*." Will said. The three looked at him.

"How do you know?"

"Any time she comes over she makes me play it." He responded, shrugging.

"Well, I'm guessing Mike's gonna wanna sing that one so we might as

well." Lucas said.

"Oh shut it, ass wipe."

"Why don't you just sing both songs? I mean come on, the songs aren't that long, and I know for a fact none of you have stage fright." Nancy said, giving them a look.

"Yeah but our voices have changed." Mike said.

"I, for one, have a great singing voice, especially now." Lucas said, grinning.

"I'm better, trust me." Dustin said, giving Lucas a little poke. Lucas just rolled his eyes.

"I'm okay." Will said. "Not the best, but I'm pretty good if I do say so myself."

"I don't really sing anymore so I don't know, honestly." Mike said, shrugging.

"Why don't you sing something now then?" Karen suggested.

"Yeah, I'd rather not."

"Oh come on, Mike! Don't be such a-" Lucas started to say but caught himself, looking like a deer caught in headlights when he saw the look Mike gave him.

"I'll sing with you, Mikey." Nancy said, nudging him in the side. He groaned.

"Fine, but just a little bit."

"Just sing some of *Mary, Did You Know*." She said, sitting at the piano. He cleared his throat and started *singing.*

Mary did you know that your baby boy will one day walk on water?

Mary did you know that your baby boy will save our sons and daughters?

Did you know that your baby boy has come to make you new?

This child that you've delivered, will soon deliver you

Mary did you know that your baby boy will give sight to a blind man?

Mary did you know that your baby boy will calm a storm with his hand?

Did you know that your baby boy has walked where angels trod?

And when you kiss your little baby, you have kissed the face of God

They were shocked to say the least. They all knew that Mike could sing, but when he was younger, his voice was definitely not as raspy and deep as it is now. His voice wasn't really deep, but it wasn't high either.

"Dude, do you like smoke or something?" Dustin asked stupidly. Mike looked at him, a mix of hurt and annoyance on his face.

"No, idiot. Why would I do that?" He thumped him on the head and crossed his arms. "Ya gonna catch a couple flies if you don't shut your mouths." He remarked, biting at his thumb nail.

"That was," Nancy started,

"Amazing!" They all chorused.

"Since when could you even sing like that?"

"We literally just went over this, Dustin." Mike rolled his eyes. "But really? It wasn't horrible?"

"No! That was great, Sweetie." Karen said, smiling at him. "I want to hear you sing more often." He chuckled.

"We'll see, mom."

23. Chapter 23

I'm so sorry for not updating in like, a week! I've been working on Collision and Eloquent Abilities quiet a lot this past week! I hope those of you who're reading them are enjoying! I plan on updating both stories at least twice a week!

Sunday, December 23, 1985

"Hello! Mikey! Get up!" Mike woke up to his little sister jumping up and down on his bed. He groaned.

"It's 8 o'clock, Holly, let me sleep." He almost begged, burying his face in his pillow.

"Actually, it's 10:30 and your friends are downstairs driving Steve up the wall." Nancy said, leaning against the door frame, a small smile as Holly continued jumping. "And it's your birthday, you *need* to get up." With another groan, he sat up, swiping his arm underneath Holly's legs, causing her to fall on top of his legs, giggling. She hugged him.

"Happy birthday Mikey." She said sweetly. He smiled.

"Thanks, Holly." She finally got off him and skipped out of the room. He flopped back down on his bed, stretching and cracking just about every bone in his body.

"Oh my God, Mike!" Nancy exclaimed, cringing. "I hate when you do that."

"I hate getting woken up." He retorted, standing up. She rolled her eyes but hugged him on his way out of the room.

"Happy birthday little brother." He gave her a weird look but thanked her. Walking down the stairs, Nancy following, Mike could already hear Steve and Dustin arguing over something that probably made no sense whatsoever.

"Why are you all here so early?" Mike whined. That caused all three of his friends to rush and hug him, almost knocking him down.

"Happy birthday!" They exclaimed in unison.

"Can't breathe." He wheezed.

"Let the kid go guys." Steve ordered with an eye roll. They let Mike go, all three of them giggling.

"What are you guys giggling about?"

"Uh, nothing?" Will hesitated. Mike raised an eyebrow at him. Then Karen came into the room, pulling Mike into an even tighter hug.

"I can't believe my little boy is 14 now!" She exclaimed.

"Ugh, mom!" He whined again, but hugged her back nonetheless. She finally let him go, the guys, this time including Steve, were giggling again.

"Now, you remember what we decided on last year, right?" She asked. He nodded.

"One present today since it's almost Christmas." He stated. She nodded, grinning.

"You'll get it later today though, alright?" He nodded again. He followed her into the kitchen, where a plate of freshly made pancakes were waiting for him. His eyes widened and he grinned. It had a candle in the middle. He sat down while everyone else got their breakfast, Karen was prepared to cook breakfast for them all, considering they always come over in the morning on his birthday. Karen lit the candle and he made a wish and blew it out, the boys cheering louder than they should have.

"You buys get louder every year." She said, shaking her head, a small smile on her lips.

"Just wait." Steve said, and she raised an eyebrow. "If they take after me, then they'll for sure get louder and rowdier, a lot more than they already are." Nancy giggled and the boys started laughing when they saw the face Karen made.

"You act like they're your kids." She said, putting a hand on her hip.

He snorted.

"That totally sounded like something a parent would say." Lucas said, grinning. Steve just rolled his eyes.

"Breakfast is good, Mrs. Wheeler."

"Thank you." She smiled at him, and then tapped Mike on the head lightly. He was stuffing his face, literally, as she sat next to him.

"Calm down, Michael." She chuckled. "They're not going anywhere." He gave her the stink eye but did as he was told.

"Sorry." He mumbled. She shook her head and dug in herself.

"So, after breakfast, you guys up for going to the park?" Steve asked. "I brought my basketball and I was thinking we could play a game or two." Mike looked at his mom, excited about basketball.

"Can we?" He asked. She nodded.

"Of course, just don't give yourself a concussion while you're out there."

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1 PM

"I literally told you not to give yourself a concussion an hour and a half ago, Michael." Karen said, automatically poking and prodding him, checking for other injuries. He squirmed, scooting as far away from her as he could, which, considering the bed he was on was against the wall, wasn't very far.

"It's not like I did it on purpose." He mumbled. He had a bag of ice against his forehead and there was a little bit of dried blood going down the side of his face. "And I'm fine, quit poking me." She sighed.

"Sorry. I'm just worried."

"I know, I'm fine mom." He gave her a small smile. "My head just hurts like a..." He didn't continue and she held in a laugh. A nurse came in, a smile on her face.

"Hi, you must be Mrs. Wheeler?" Karen nodded. "My name is Aubrey and I'll be taking care of Michael today. Now, he did cut his head open when he hit his head, so he'll need a couple stitches."

"Awe man!" Mike whined.

"It'll be okay, I'll numb you up real good, okay? Then we'll run a couple of tests to make sure there's no brain damage or anything."

Thirty minutes later, an almost crying Mike sighed in relief when Aubrey said,

"All done! You needed ten all together." Ten minutes for the numbing to take affect, another twenty to put the stitches in. "Just keep the ice wrapped in the towel on your head until I come back, okay?" He nodded, leaning back on the uncomfortable bed. Karen looked at him and he looked at her.

"You could've cried." She said.

"And look like even more of a baby? No thanks." She rolled her eyes at that statement.

"You know full well that I'd have cried or your friends would have." He sighed but said nothing.

"Did Steve take them home?" He asked. She nodded.

"Yeah, he took them back to our house. They wanted to stay but they don't need to be up here for hours on end." Mike nodded in agreement. "We'll probably be up here for another three or four hours." He groaned.

"I hate hospitals." He grumbled.

"Me too." She patted his leg. "So, mind telling me what happened exactly?"

24. Chapter 24

"Well, everything was going fine, Dustin, Lucas, and Will were on a team, and me, Steve and Max were on a team. Max met us at the park." He explained. "We won a bunch of games, the others only made like, two baskets out of all of them." She nodded, telling him to go on, "Max was talking crap to them and they were talking crap right back, well, Lucas and Dustin were, because Will's not like that. We were gonna play one more game and then go get lunch, and let's just say I walked passed one of the benches and slipped on the smallest freaking patch of ice and hit my head on the corner. That's basically it." He shrugged. "They all laughed until they saw the blood, and Steve almost screamed." He giggled a little at that. "Dustin started freaking out, just about screaming *oh my god* at the top of his lungs, Max just laughed at Steve and Lucas and Will were the ones who helped me up. That's all I really remember after that. I was kinda out of it for a few minutes."

"Your friends are something else." She muttered, and patted his leg. "Well, at least it wasn't any worse than that." He nodded, then grimaced.

"This is a hospital, shouldn't they give me pain medicine or something?"

"Aubrey will probably bring you something in a few minutes, just sit tight."

"Wait, where's Mike?" Nancy asked when the group arrived back at the house.

"He got a concussion." Dustin said immediately.

"What?" She exclaimed. "Mom didn't tell me he got hurt! What happened?"

"He slipped on some ice and hit his head on the corner of a bench." Lucas replied.

"Cut his head open." Nancy glared at Steve.

"What? It's not my fault the kids clumsy as hell. At least I took him to the hospital." She rolled her eyes but nodded, sighing.

"True. Did mom tell you guys what to do when you get here or did she say wait?"

"She said we can go ahead and put the decorations up." Will told her. She nodded. "Jonathan is getting his cake around 6 and then coming over."

"Okay, great. Well, they're probably gonna be at the hospital for a while, so we might as well get to work."

Aubrey did bring him something, four hours later when they were about to leave. He was ready to curse anyone and everyone out, especially when they made him sit in a wheel chair.

"I can walk." He argued, standing up. He stumbled a bit and Aubrey raised an eyebrow.

"Alright, Mr. Stumbles, get in the chair so you don't fall and hit your head again." If looks could kill, she'd be dead right now. She just laughed and patted the seat. He reluctantly sat down, resting his cheek in his hand as she wheeled him out of the Emergency room, where his mom had pulled the car up to the door.

"I can't feel my forehead." He mumbled after a few minutes in the car. She glanced at him and saw him lightly touching his forehead. She chuckled,

"It should wear off soon." She said. He nodded. "The boys and Max are still at our house, you up for it?" She asked. He nodded again.

"Yeah, hopefully the medicine will start working by the time we get home."

"It should."

Twenty minutes later, Karen parked the car in the drive way behind

Steve's car.

"Is your head still hurting?" She asked.

"Eh, not really."

"Good. Come on, let's get you inside. It's cold." He opened the door himself and walked pretty close to her. That is, until he walked in the house and was *almost* tackled to the ground by Dustin.

"Dude!" Mike exclaimed.

"I'm sorry! I was just worried. You could have like, died or something!" He exclaimed. He let Mike go and lifted Mike's hair out of the way, eyeing the stitches on his hair line.

"Ooh you needed stitches?" Lucas asked. Mike nodded.

"Alright boys, calm down. Let him sit." Karen told them, gently pushing them away from Mike. Mike plopped in the Lay-Z-Boy and put the leg up, stretching out on it. "Don't go to sleep." She warned him, giving him a look. He groaned.

"I'm not going to sleep, mom." He rubbed his eyes and then looked around, noticing the poorly strung streamers and balloons taped to the walls. He chuckled. "Nice job, guys." He said.

"Like you'd have done any better, ya shithead." Steve joked. "So, how'd your first concussion go?" Mike gave him the stink eye.

"I still can't feel my forehead." He replied.

"What?" Max asked, raising an eyebrow.

"They numbed me up to put the stitches in." He answered.

"Did you cry?" Will asked.

"No-"

"Yes he did." Karen said. "Well, he didn't exactly cry, but he almost did. He had tears in his eyes." Mike rolled his eyes, his face turning

pink.

"Hey, I needed a couple stitches in my face after my fight with Billy's dumb ass last year, and I *cried.*" Steve told him.

"Like a baby." Dustin added.

"Dustin! Shut. Up."

"Never!"

"Look, if he doesn't shut up now, he's never gonna shut up." Nancy said, finally walking in the room. Mike snorted and Dustin pouted. "You guys know it's true." The rest of them giggled. She turned her attention to Mike, who was sitting comfortably in the recliner ***(I'm just gonna call it that from now on cause I'm to lazy to write out lay-z-boy XD)***. "How you feeling? You're head still hurt?"

"Nah I'm good." He replied. He really wants to see El, so he'd be even better then.

"Want anything to drink?" She asked. He shook his head. "Well, just let me know." There was a knock on the door and she went to answer it. "Oh, hold on." She told whoever it was. She poked her head around the corner. "Will one of you guys cover Mike's eyes for me?" She asked, and instead of actually covering Mike's eyes with his hand, Steve put a blanket over his face, which caused everyone to laugh. Mike just made an annoyed sound, crossing his arms. A few minutes later, Nancy pulled the blanket off him, right when he was about to fall asleep.

"Aha! No sleeping for you mister!" He glared at her. He noticed Jonathan was standing in the doorway, a grin on his face as he watched Nancy. He noticed Mike looking at him and his cheeks turned a light pink. He coughed and said,

"So, uh, I heard you had your first concussion?"

"You guys act like it's a big deal." Mike said, sitting up slightly.

"It kinda is." Max stated.

"Yeah but it's not like it's his first steps or somethin." Dustin argued. That caused a chain reaction and just about everyone was arguing over random stuff, and no one noticed Mike dozing off.

25. Chapter 25

The rest of Mike's birthday and part of Christmas Eve will be in the next chapter!

Mike was awoken from his five second nap when he sneezed.

"*Shit.*" He cursed, sneezing again, this time into his sleeve. Everyone laughed. He put the leg of the chair back down and stood up.

"Hey, where you going?" Jonathan asked.

"To pee." He replied. He did his business and washed his hands. Looking in the mirror, he pushed his hair away from his forehead and inspected the cut, noticing the dark bruise that had formed around it in the last couple hours. He sighed and rubbed his eyes and finally left the bathroom. Walking back into the living room, he was pulled into a tight hug by a tiny, curly haired brunette. He smiled and hugged her back.

"He didn't smile like that when I hugged him!" Dustin whined.

"Dustin, shut the hell up." Lucas rolled his eyes.

"Happy birthday." El whispered in his ear. He smiled and kissed her cheek.

"Thanks, El." She finally let him go a minute or two later when Hopper coughed. He ruffled Mike's hair and Mike flinched back.

"You okay kid?" Hopper asked, raising an eyebrow. Mike put his hand over his forehead for a few seconds.

"Uh..."

"He got a concussion." Dustin blurted out.

"Wait, what?" Dustin made an *oh shit* face and went in the kitchen.

"Dustin I'm gonna kill you!" Mike said, throwing a pillow at his head.

"They'd have found out eventually!" Dustin yelled back. Mike rolled his eyes and looked up at Hopper.

"I got a concussion earlier. Playing basketball."

"What is concussion?" El asked, confused.

"It's when you hit your head really hard and it knocks you out, basically." Will explained. She looked at Mike, worried.

"Hey, I'm fine El. Don't worry about me." He said, giving her a smile. She pushed his shoulders lightly, towards the recliner.

"Sit." She demanded. At that very moment, Mike promised to murder Dustin...Eventually. He sat in the chair while the others snickered. He patted the space next to him and she joined him, cuddling into his side.

"So what happened?" Hopper asked him, which turned into a straight up replay of it. Dustin pretended to be Mike and acted like he slipped and actually hit his head on the table, which made everyone, including himself, laugh.

"Oh, you know what?" Steve asked. Everyone turned their attention to him. "Will got it on his camera."

"No way!" Max exclaimed. "Can we watch it?"

"You saw it, why do you want to watch it again?" Mike asked, rolling his eyes.

"Because you, my innocent friend, are the first in our group to ever drop an F-bomb." She replied. His eyes almost popped out of his head.

"What?" She giggled and nodded, the boys nodding in agreement. "No I didn't."

"Oh but ya did." Will laughed.

"I don't believe it." He shook his head.

"What's the F-bomb?" El asked, confused. Unfortunately, Hopper heard her ask that question from the kitchen, where he was talking with Karen, Nancy, and Jonathan.

"Who said it?" He demanded, walking in the room.

"Mike." Everyone chorused. The look Hopper gave him made him want to curl up in a hole and stay there forever.

"No I didn't! I've *never* said that." He said, looking up at the chief in fear.

"Mike, dude, you *did*." Lucas said. "We have proof!" Mike still looked confused, and El was ready to slap someone because no one answered her question.

"It's a bad word, El. Don't worry about it." Hopper told her.

"It was after you hit your head. We were helping you up and you said, *where the F did this bench come from*." Will told him.

"You literally just split your head open, of course you don't remember it." Max rolled her eyes. Mike bit his lip. He vaguely remembered asking about a bench, but after that he was pretty out of it, at least, he was until his mom arrived at the hospital.

"If I really did, I'm sorry." He said, his cheeks turning pink. "I didn't mean to. It just..." He already hated himself for the pun. "Slipped...apparently." Max burst out laughing, followed by Lucas and Dustin while the others just rolled their eyes.

"If I ever catch you saying it..." Hopper gave Mike a look and he immediately nodded.

"Never. I promise."

A while later, Karen popped her head in the room and said,

"Dinner is ready!" Mike raised an eyebrow.

"Wait, what time is it?" He asked.

"Eight thirty." Jonathan replied.

"Dang." He mumbled. He stood up from the recliner and held a hand out to El, who took it with a smile. She followed him into the dinning room, where majority of the decorations were. He chuckled to himself, sitting down next to his mom, El sitting next to him. Steve and Jonathan had brought extra chairs from the garage so everyone could sit comfortably. It was one of Mike's favorites, lasagna, and his mom literally made two pans of it.

Everyone talked and laughed for the next thirty minutes or so, just enjoying each other's company and the way Mike joked around with everyone. Once everyone was done eating, Mike's cake was placed in front of him, 14 candles on it. Hopper lit them all, and they sang happy birthday to him, and El even joined in, because she made Hopper sing it for her, just so she could sing it to Mike.

"Happy birthday Mikey!" Holly basically yelled, although she was standing right next to him. He snorted but blew out his candles and everyone cheered. After cake, everyone retreated into the living room, but El grabbed Mike's hand and made him stay in the hall with her.

"Birthday present." She told him, noticing the confused look on his face. She dug around in the small bag she carried and pulled out an envelope. He smiled.

"You didn't have to get me anything." He told her, taking the envelope. He figured it was just a card, but he knew he'd love it.

"What's she giving him?" Lucas whispered to Dustin, who shrugged. The party plus Steve were watching them through the doorway, just barely able to see them.

"You kids are so nosy." Karen said, rolling her eyes.

"I wanted to." She told him, biting her lip. He gave her a smile and opened it. He pulled out the folded piece of paper and unfolded it, and the party had never seen a smile so big on his face. He looked at El, who was fiddling with her hands. He grabbed one of her hands, which caused her to look up at him, and pulled her into a tight hug.

"I love you too."

26. Chapter 26

Well, I lied, Christmas Eve WILL be in the next chapter. I hope you guys liked it! And thank you for your reviews! I appreciate it! :D

"Did he just say *I love you too*?" Lucas hissed, loudly. Everyone turned to look at him, including Mike and El, who glared at him, *and* the rest of the nosy party. Mike grabbed her hand and led her back into the kitchen, making sure they couldn't be seen this time.

"But is that what he said?" Will asked, looking at Lucas.

"I can confirm." Hopper said, raising his hand slightly.

"Me too!" Karen added.

"How did you two know?"

"She told me." Karen said, shrugging. "Last week."

"And I watched her draw the picture." Hopper added. Karen smiled, remembering the conversation.

"She told me he was her favorite person in the world, and told me not to tell." She said, and everyone smiled at the innocence.

"I love it, El." Mike told her, admiring the picture she drew him. "I'm gonna hang it up in my room." She grinned widely.

"I love you, Mike." She whispered. Just hearing her say it made his heart burst with... love? Pride? He didn't know but he loved the feeling.

"I love you too, El." He hugged her, and she hugged him back, burying her face in his shoulder.

"Did you grow?" She asked, her voice muffled. He chuckled.

"Probably. My pants are getting too short." She giggled. She pulled away and pecked him on the lips. He kissed her again, longer this

time, but they were interrupted when someone cleared their throat.

"You two might wanna stop making out in here before Hopper sees you." Steve told them, leaning against the doorway. They blushed and Mike glared at him.

"We were not making out!" Mike grumbled, bumping into Steve purposefully as he walked by him. Steve laughed and followed them. The three sat on the floor near the Christmas tree.

"Hey Steve, can I drive home tonight?" Max asked, grinning cheekily. Steve laughed sarcastically.

"Not a chance." He said, rolling his eyes.

"I'm serious though, I do want to learn how to drive before I my 15th birthday." She said.

"We'll see." He told her, winking at her, and she took that as a yes.

"Sweet!"

"So," Hopper tossed a couple M&M's in his mouth, "Who, in your little party, is the oldest?"

"Mike." They chorused.

"What, did you flunk or something?" Steve asked him. Mike rolled his eyes and shook his head.

"It's because he was born so late in the year." Karen answered. "If he was born before September first he'd be in high school this year."

"Oh okay, I gotcha."

"Imagine if Mike had been in a grade higher than all of us." Dustin said, lookin at Lucas and Will. "We all probably wouldn't have been friends."

"You think he'd have been friends with Troy-" Lucas joked, but Mike interrupted him,

"Really? I will punch you." Mike glared at him.

"I'm kidding, dude, you're too nice to have been friends with him." Mike rolled his eyes but gave him a smile. For the next few minutes, everyone had small conversations with each other, Max and Lucas sneaking kisses here and there, Mike and El kept staring at each other, and would've kissed a few times if it hadn't been for Hopper. Mike didn't even notice his mom go upstairs, but he did notice the envelope Nancy handed him. He raised an eyebrow and took it from her. He opened it and pulled out a birthday card that had a ten dollar bill in it.

Happy birthday, ya tall awkward lover boy. Love, Nancy.

Mike rolled his eyes at her but couldn't help the smile on his face.

"Thanks, Nance." He told her. She grinned at him. He started to put the card back in the envelope when something fell out. He picked it up and saw that it was a guitar pick. He looked at her, confused.

"Surprise, Mikey." His mom said and he turned to look at her, and she was standing in the doorway with a guitar in hand, a blue ribbon stuck on the side of it. His jaw dropped as he looked at her. She smiled at him. He stood up and walked over to her quickly.

"Is that...?" He asked. She nodded.

"Grandpa wanted you to have it, and grandma *just* found it." She told him. He took the guitar from her, admiring it. He turned it around and saw that it something had been engraved on it.

Mikey, though I'm not here to teach you anymore, always remember what I taught you. Whether it was about life or love, always remember. Love, Grandpa.

Mike bit his lip as he looked at his mom.

"I don't know what to say." He said quietly. She smiled and squeezed his shoulder gently.

"You don't have to say anything." She assured him.

"I think," Nancy started, "that you should play us a little something." He turned around and looked at her, and saw the biggest grin on her face. He rolled his eyes but nodded, and sat back down beside El, who looked at the guitar with the weirdest face he's ever seen.

"What is *that*?" She asked.

"It's a guitar." He told her. "It makes music. See?" He ran his fingers across the strings and it made a sound, and she jumped, causing everyone to laugh.

"Not good music." She told him. He chuckled, and picked up the pick he'd dropped, and played a few chords. She raised an eyebrow at him. "Good music." She decided and he chuckled again.

"I didn't know you could play guitar." Hopper said. Mike shrugged.

"It never came up in conversations." He said. "I don't know a lot, just what my grandpa taught me."

"I'll teach you." Steve piped up. Mike raised an eyebrow.

"*You* play guitar?" Dustin asked. Steve nodded.

"It's not *that* big of a secret, dipshit."

"Can you *not* call me a dipshit?"

"Nah, you're a dipshit so I'm gonna call you a dipshit." He looked at the rest of the party. "Same with you shitheads."

"Are we shitheads or dipshits?" Lucas asked. Karen rolled her eyes and sat on the couch next to Nancy. Steve chuckled and looked at Mike,

"Both, now, I promise I won't break your guitar, can I play a bit?"

27. Chapter 27

So, it's like the end of January while writing this, and I'm listening to Christmas music to get BACK in the spirit to write these next few chapters lmao XD.

Any song requests?

Also, I was gonna make this chapter longer but I feel bad for not updating in like two weeks so here you go! XD

"I really don't understand how he's able to sleep through you guys." Nancy said, looking at her little brother, who's out cold on the floor, his head in El's lap. "You're so loud."

"No, *you're* loud, Nancy." Dustin said, rolling his eyes. She made a face.

"Don't make me put a snow ball in your shirt." Dustin laughed at that.

"I'd assume that El playing with his hair is what made him fall asleep so quick." Karen said, smiling down at him.

"Alrighty, get all your shit together, dipshits, I gotta get you guys home." Steve said, clapping his hands and getting up. They all started complaining but did as they were told. El poked Mike's cheek and he grunted in response.

"Mike, wake up." She poked his cheek again and he opened one eye to look at her.

"What?" He mumbled.

"Everyone's leaving, gotta say bye." She responded.

"Bye dude, I'm gonna head on home." Lucas said, standing in front of Mike. Mike shifted to where he was laying on his back and looking up at Lucas, who laughed. "Happy birthday."

"Thanks, bye." He mumbled and gave a little wave. He did the same

thing to everyone. Lucas kissed Max goodbye and went home, and she waited with Dustin by the door. Jonathan and Will already left.

"Little Wheeler, wake up for more than two seconds so you can say bye, and thank me again for taking you to the hospital." Steve said, leaning over Mike. Mike put his hand on Steve's face, silently telling him to shut up.

"Thanks, goodbye." Steve snorted and shook his head.

He finally got up off the floor when it was time for El and Hopper to leave. Mike walked them out.

"Get some rest, kid." Hopper said, patting him on the shoulder before getting in the truck. El hugged him.

"You have a good birthday?" She asked. He smiled and nodded.

"Other than the concussion, yeah, it was amazing. Like I said earlier, I'm gonna hang your picture up in my room." She grinned widely at him and kissed him, forgetting about Hopper for a minute, but thankfully, he didn't say anything to them.

"I love you, Mike."

"I love you too." He smiled at her. He jogged back to the door and waved as they left, and fell face first into the couch.

"Mike, go get in your bed." Karen chuckled and he groaned into the cushion. He said something but she couldn't understand him. "What?"

"I don't want to go upstairs." He said, moving his head to look at her. She rolled her eyes.

"You'll be more comfortable in your bed, up you go." He whined but got up and trudged upstairs, mumbling goodnight to her, and as soon as his head hit the pillow, he was out.

Steve dropped Dustin off first, having to stay for a few minutes and talk to his mom about God know what, and then left to take Max home.

"So... how's the deal with Billy going?" He asked, glancing at her. She shrugged.

"He's still a dick but not as bad as he was. He still insults Lucas but I threaten him with the bat and he shuts up." Steve chuckled.

"Well, if he, or your stepdad give you any problems, don't hesitate to call me, alright? I'll handle it for you." She raised an eyebrow. He glanced at her again and rolled his eyes. "Hey, I might've gotten my ass beat that night, but that doesn't mean it'll always turn out that way." She chuckled. The rest of the ride was quiet, and before she got out, she said,

"Thanks."

"Hey, I'd rather you not skate all the way home in this weather, especially at ni-"

"I don't mean for the ride. Well, I do, but thanks for sticking up for me."

"Oh." He looked at her. "It's not a problem, red. I'll do anything for you shitheads at this point." She rolled her eyes but smiled. "Go on in, I can see your mom peaking out the windows. I'll pick you up around five tomorrow." She nodded and fist bumped him.

"See you tomorrow, Harrington."

Monday, December 24, 1985

"Mom!" Mike called, walking down the stairs. It's 8:30 in the morning and she was already cooking dinner for tonight. Oh, and his head feels like it's about to bust.

"What are you doing up? I figured you'd still be asleep." She said, turning to look at him as he walked in the kitchen.

"My head hurts." He mumbled. "Do we have any pain medicine or something?" He asked, leaning against the counter.

"Let me look." She looked through a couple cabinets until she found

what she was looking for. She handed him two pills and said, "Take these and go lay back down, rest up for a couple more hours, we've got a busy day ahead of us." He smiled at her in thanks and took them and went back upstairs to his room. He laid in his bed for about an hour before he gave up and just laid there, staring at the ceiling. Down the hall, he heard Nancy's door open, but figured she was just going to the bathroom, and nearly fell off his bed when she said,

"Hey."

"Jeez, Nancy, don't do that." She chuckled.

"Sorry." She plopped on the bed next to him, putting her head on the same pillow as him. "What are you doing up? I figured you'd be asleep."

"Mom said the same thing." He laughed lightly. "I had a headache like an hour ago and she gave me some medicine, but I couldn't go back to sleep, so I'm just laying here."

"Is it still hurting?" She asked, pushing his hair away from his forehead to look at the cut, noticing the bruise. "Damn, that's a nasty bruise."

"Tell me about it." He mumbled. "And no, it doesn't hurt anymore. The medicine helped. I just can't go back to sleep."

"Nervous about giving El her present?" She bumped his shoulder with hers and rolled her eyes.

"Kinda...but that's not the only reason." She raised an eyebrow.

"Is it about the little singing gig mom forced you into?"

"Maybe." She giggled and he glared at her. "Hey! There's nothing to worry about, Mike. You have an awesome voice." He scoffed.

"No, according to Dustin, I sound like Hopper after too many cigarettes."

"Dustin is an idiot, and you *don't* sound like that. Yeah, your voice is kind of raspy but that makes it even better!" He scoffed again and she

pursed her lips. "Okay, I get it."

"Get what?"

"You think El won't like it."

"What? No!" He glared at her again, scooting away from her, but she just grabbed him and pulled him closer, hugging him tightly.

"Uh, yeah? Mike, that girl would love you if you sounded like a dying seal."

"Can you let me go?" He demanded.

"No, not until you admit that you can sing worth a shit, unlike your sister, who *does* sound like a *dying seal*!" He laughed.

"No you don't!" She started singing in a loud, obnoxious voice, tickling his sides and he burst out laughing. "Stop! Stop!"

"Admit it!" She continued tickling him, singing loudly, until,

"Fine! I can sing! Stop before I piss myself!" Nancy laughed, finally letting him go. He immediately got up and ran to the bathroom. She got up off his bed, smiling at the drawing El had given him, that he hasn't put up yet. She bit her lip and headed downstairs, where their mom was just starting to walk up.

"Is everything okay up there?" She asked. Nancy giggled and nodded.

"Yeah, just the tickle monster made an appearance." She wiggled her fingers and Karen chuckled, turning around. "Hey, do we have any tacks?"

"Uh, I think up there." She pointed to a cabinet and Nancy looked through it, before she found a small, plastic container filled with them. She jogged back upstairs to Mike's room, where he was sitting and looking at the picture.

"Please don't tickle me again." He grabbed a pillow and hugged it as if it would stop her. She laughed and shook her head.

"I'm not. I got some tacks for the drawing." She held them up and shook them. He grinned and stood up. She handed him tacks and he tacked it right next to his door. "Just imagine the smile on her face when she see's you put it up."

"I told her I was." He bit his lip. She flicked his shoulder.

"Come on, even though there's a giant ass mess in the kitchen, mom made us breakfast. And Holly will be up here screaming at us soon."

28. Chapter 28

Sorry for taking forever to update! The rest of Christmas Eve AND Christmas will be in the next chapter! Promise! And it won't take almost another month to post XD. I hope you guys like it!

"Merry Christmas Eve!" Holly screeched when Dustin and his mom walked in.

"Awe, Merry Christmas Eve, Holly! I hope you're having a jolly time!" Claudia joked, hugging the smaller girl. Dustin ruffled her hair and she glared at him.

"You messed up my hair. Mikey!" She yelled. Mike came in from the kitchen, wearing black dress pants and a burgundy, long sleeved dress shirt.

"What's up?" He asked. She pointed up at Dustin.

"He messed up my hair. Beat him up."

"Holly, do you see these noodle arms? I couldn't beat him up if I tried." She giggled at that and then ran off for Nancy or Karen to fix her hair.

"I hope you know I'm gonna start calling you Noodle now." Dustin told him. Mike gave him the stink eye.

"I hate you. Where's everyone else?" He asked.

"Lucas is taking forever to get ready, you know him, takes freaking two or three hour showers. He wants to smell *extra good* for Max, according to what he told me." Mike snorted.

"Wow."

"Yeah, and Steve is on the way to pick Max up, and I think Will, Jonathan and Mrs. Byers are on the way." Mike nodded and the two went down in the basement. "So, how much shit have you had to put up with so far today?"

"Nothing too bad, actually." Mike said, plopping down on the couch and grabbing his guitar. "I had a major headache this morning so mom gave me medicine, then Nancy tickled me half to death. I almost pissed myself."

"Nancy? As in Nancy Wheeler? As in your older sister Nancy?" Mike rolled his eyes and kicked Dustin in the leg.

"Yeah, that Nancy, dipshit. I know, it's weird. She's kind of... coming out of her shell, I guess you could say, now that dad's gone." Mike shrugged. "But since I got a concussion, mom hasn't asked me to do anything, other than try and keep Holly entertained, which was going fine until you and your mom showed up."

"Hey! It's not my fault your little sister has a crush on me." Mike laughed at that. And he laughed *hard*.

"What's so funny?" Lucas asked, bounding down the stairs.

"All I said is that Holly as a crush on me." Dustin said, clueless as ever. Lucas snorted.

"Nah, man, she doesn't have a crush on you."

"She's in love with Will." Mike said, snorting afterwards.

"Hmf." Dustin crossed his arms and pouted.

"Anyways, what were you guys talking about?" Lucas asked. "Before Dustin thought Holly had a crush on him."

"He asked me how crazy it was here, basically." Mike told him, and went on to tell him that his mom wasn't making him do anything because of his concussion.

"You're gonna bleed the hell out of it too, aren't you?" Lucas asked, giving him an accusatory look.

"Like you wouldn't. I have stitches, Lucas, *stitches*. In my head, I think I have a right to do *nothing*." Dustin snickered and Lucas rolled his eyes.

"Mike, your sister is hiding from me again." Will said, hoping down the stairs two at a time. Mike started laughing again and Dustin pouted, so Lucas took it upon himself to explain to Will what was going on.

"Well, don't you look spiffy." Steve said, opening the passenger door for Max, who rolled her eyes. She was wearing a red, long sleeved button up shirt and dark pants. Her hair was in a side braid, and she had the smallest hint of mascara and lip gloss. He snorted and shut the door, and grabbed the presents her mom was holding.

"You've got a little something in here too." Mrs. Hargrove told him.

"Well thank ya! You didn't have to do that."

"It's not a problem. Your gift to me is keeping her safe." He grinned at her and gave her a side hug, and then put the presents in the back seat and waved as he got in the drivers side. He drove off. "You do look nice though." He told Max, nudging her arm. She chuckled.

"Thanks. You look like an idiot. What's with the bow tie?" She asked. He scoffed.

"How dare you." He said, dramatically, putting a hand over his heart. "I honestly just wore it so my mom would shut the hell up. She acts like it's prom or something." He shrugged. She laughed. "I'm gonna take it off before we go inside, remind me to." She nodded.

"I'll probably take my hair down too. Maybe get El to redo it."

"Why?"

"Blame Mike, actually."

"Of course."

"He taught her how to braid hair, and she insists on braiding mine whenever we're together. I don't mind though, she gets better at it each time."

"The girl's smart, she'll be ready for school by next year."

"God, I hope so. Mike whines constantly about not being able to see her everyday." Steve snorted.

"And you don't whine when you don't see Lucas?"

"Uh, no?"

"Sure." She smacked his arm and he just grinned.

"El, come on, Mike will think you look great in a potato sack dress." Hopper called. The kid's been in her room for the last hour, trying on different dresses. She poked her head out and glared, then made a face.

"Potato sack dress?"

"I'll explain it in the car, come on, you don't want to be late, do you?" He asked. She sighed.

"Okay." She disappeared into her room again and came back out five minutes later. She was wearing a long sleeved, ankle length burgundy dress that had a dark green belt around her waist, and green flats to match. She wore a black head band, keeping most of her curls out of her face.

"You look great, El." Hopper told her. She smiled at him and grabbed her coat. "Go on and get in the truck, I'll grab the presents." He told her. She nodded and skipped out of the cabin.

By the time they were on the main road, she'd managed to find the best radio channel for Christmas songs, and was singing along to one of the ones she knew.

"You've got a nice voice there, kid." Hopper told her, and she beamed at him.

"Thank you. Mike is singing today." She said, smiling. He raised an eyebrow.

"He is?" She nodded.

"Mm hm, with Dustin, Lucas and Will."

"Oh, okay."

"Mrs. Wheeler wanted them to sing."

"I figured." He chuckled. "I doubt they'd do it on their own."

"Why?" He shrugged.

"They just don't seem like the type to do that sort of thing." She looked at him and blinked. She shrugged and went back to singing. He chuckled, resisting the urge to ruffle her hair, because he knew damn well she'd make him turn around and go back home so she could fix it.

"Are you giving Joyce the drawing?" She asked him. He glanced at her and nodded.

"Yep, I put it in an envelope and everything." He told her. She giggled quietly at that.

They were the last to arrive, meaning everyone was back up in the kitchen and living room, parents talking and Will chasing Dustin around the dining room table. Mike was standing next to Mr. Sinclair, talking to him, holding Holly with both arms. She'd insisted on him holding her, just so she could play in his hair. She was the first to spot El, and when she did, she shrieked right in Mike's ear.

"EL!" Mike almost dropped her, *almost,* but he did put her down and put his hand over his left ear, grimacing.

"Jesus Christ, Holly, can you get *any loud-*" He shut up when he saw El, and his jaw dropped.

"You're gonna catch a fly, Wheeler." Hopper told him, nudging him in the shoulder as he walked past him and into the kitchen to talk to Joyce. Mike grinned at El as he walked over to her. She immediately wrapped her arms around him and he hugged her back.

"You look amazing, El." He whispered. She grinned back at him.

"Ooh! Mikey's in trouble!" Holly said, giggling as she pointed up. Mike looked up and his cheeks turned red. *Of course,* there just had to be mistletoe every damn where in the house. The boys started giggling and Max raised her eyebrows at him. El grinned at him mischievously, as if she knew something he didn't.

"You little sneak." He mumbled but kissed her. It only last a couple seconds, but his face was as red as Santa's hat when he pulled away. There'd been a flash, meaning either Jonathan or his mom took a picture. Mike grabbed her hand and pulled her into the living room, looking down at the floor as he did so.

"You guys are so childish." Nancy said, rolling her eyes at the boys.

"Yeah, shitheads, wait until you *fall in love* with a girl."Steve mocked, which resulted in getting smacked right in the face with a plastic ornament. "I deserved that." Mike glared at him.

"Oh my goodness, you two match! Did you plan that?" Mrs. Sinclair asked. Mike looked at El's dress and she looked at his shirt. Mike snorted.

"We didn't, actually." He said.

"What a coinky dink then!" Claudia said, and then laughed when Dustin started grumbling about her saying *coinky dink*.

"Who even says that?" He muttered.

"You literally said that a few minutes ago, hypocrite." Will said, raising an eyebrow at him

"Bite me, Byers." Will snorted.

"Michael, why don't you go get your guitar and play for everyone?" Karen said. He sighed, but didn't argue. He stood from his seat next to El and walked towards the basement. She grabbed his shoulder. "Please, *please* keep Holly entertained for me. She is driving me nuts in the kitchen." He snorted and nodded.

"Will do, mom." He told her. She gave him a smile and went to grab his guitar. Walking back in the living room, he announced, "Alrighty,

all the children sit down and we'll sing Rudolf the Red Nosed Reindeer!"

"There are only two children, Mike." Dustin said, raising an eyebrow.

"I'm talking about you too, Henderson. Get your ass on the floor." Dustin scowled at him. Mike turned to Steve, Max, and Lucas. "You three too."

"Wheeler!" Hopper barked, laughing. Mike snorted.

"You've been fourteen for a day, Mike. A day." Lucas said, rolling his eyes. They did sit down though, around the Christmas tree, where Holly and Erica were sitting. Hopper and Mr. Sinclair sat on the couch with El and Nancy, and Mike sat in the recliner. His mom, Joyce, Mrs. Sinclair, and Claudia were in the kitchen, talking to Jonathan, who was helping them cook.

"Anyone wanna start? Holly, you remember the names?" He asked. She looked up at him.

"Uh, kinda? Help me?" She asked sweetly. He smiled and nodded. He started picking at the strings and said,

"You know Dasher and Dancer," He looked at her and she continued.

"And Prancer and Vixen, Comet and Cupid, And Donner and..."

"Blitzen." He sang. "But do you recall, the most famous reindeer of all?"

After that, everyone who remembered the lyrics sang along, while Holly giggled and danced with El. Jonathan had obviously left the kitchen to record every bit, upon the request by Karen. After about ten more minutes of Mike playing his guitar to the most random songs, Karen announced that the food was ready.

Almost everyone managed to squeeze into the table, having more than enough room for plates and cups because all of the food was in the kitchen instead of all over the table. Hopper, Mr. Sinclair, Jonathan and Steve stood while they ate, letting everyone else sit at the table

"What are these?" El asked Mike, from her seat next to him. She held up her fork.

"String beans. They're better than peas, I promise." He told her. She made a face at them, but tried them. She made another face and said,

"Not much." He chuckled.

"I don't like them either, but mom makes me eat them anyways." She gave him a smile and ate the rest of her them before eating the rest of her food. Everyone made small talk, and Lucas and Max were playing footsies under the table, which Will silently found hilarious. He was seated between Max and Holly, who would not, for the life of him, look his way.

"Holly!" He sang quietly, trying to get her attention. She wouldn't look at him. Karen raised an eyebrow at him. "Cat got your tongue, Holls?" He asked. She, in turn, looked at him and stuck her tongue out at him, before giggling. He chuckled.

"Told you." Mike told Dustin, who sat on his other side. Dustin glared at him and then began explaining to El how good figgy pudding was.

"What is figgy?" El asked Mike.

"It's a fruit." He explained. "It's really called a fig, but people say figgy pudding. I don't know why."

"Like a nickname?"

"I guess so, yeah."

"Can I call you a nickname?" He raised an eyebrow and nodded, taking a sip of his water. "Beans." He spit his water back in the cup and coughed.

"Beans? Why beans?" He asked, and Hopper, who had over heard their conversation, started laughing.

"Because you're a bean pole." She said, shrugging innocently. "Dad called you that last night." Mike turned and looked at Hopper, who just raised his eyebrows as he drank his drink.

"I don't know what she's talking about, Beans." El giggled and Mike mock pouted.

"Does that mean we can call you that too, Mike?" Max asked, wiggling her eyebrows.

"Nope." He said, popping the *P*. "Mike is just fine."

"You're not fun." She said, rolling her eyes. Mike shrugged.

"Only El can call me Beans, now. Hop can stick to Bean Pole if he wants." Hopper laughed again and went in the kitchen.

"I can't with you kids, honestly." Mr. Sinclair chuckled. Mike shrugged and held El's hand.

"What can I say? We're special."

29. Chapter 29

Yikes, this is definitely over a month late XD. I'm sooo sorry! I haven't really been inspired for this story, cus, ya know, writer's block is a bitch, and all my inspiration has gone to Collision and the sequel to EA, and also, school. I'm definitely not quitting with this story, but there might be a time skip after this chapter because I've dragged Christmas on wayyyy too long. Of course, what's happened in the time skip will be mentioned, but I'm not sure *when* it'll be yet. *Hopefully* it won't take a full month and a week to update, but I'm not promising anything this time lmao.

Also, smartass Mike appears and there's a bit of Max/Mike bonding.

"Michael! I swear, if you give yourself *another* concussion, I will beat your ass!" Karen called as he chased Holly down the hall. Mike laughed, finally catching a giggling Holly and carrying her back in the living room, where everyone was waiting on him.

"Jesus, Holly, you're getting heavy."

"No, it's just your noodle arms, Noodle." Dustin told him. Mike glared at him, putting Holly on the floor and promptly grabbing a pillow and whacking him in the face with it.

"Shut your face, Dusty." Mike mocked, dancing away from Dustin's hands as he tried to smack him. He grabbed his guitar and sat on the other side of Lucas, who rolled his eyes at the two.

"Okay, shitheads, do your thing." Steve told them. The four teens glared at him and he snickered.

"Uh, okay." Mike strummed a little as Lucas said,

"We're singing this one, because it's Holly's favorite song." Holly clapped, giggling. They sang *Santa Claus is Coming to Town* but Mike played the guitar instead of singing with them. Then came *Go Tell It On The Mountain,* which El had shockingly sang along with, albeit

quietly. They sang a couple of them mixed together, getting applause after each song, when Karen asked Mike,

"Will you sing Blue Christmas?"

"Mom!" He whined. "Why?"

"Yeah, I wanna see your Elvis impression." Nancy said, snorting at the look he gave her.

"Impression my ass." He mumbled, making a face at how weird it sounded. He sighed, giving in and strumming the guitar again. "This is the last one too, because I'm ready for presents." He said, giving his mom a look. She chuckled and nodded.

"I'll have a Blue Christmas without you, I'll be so blue just thinking about you..." He sang, trying not to focus on the lyrics, as he was the definition of the song last Christmas. The parents swayed slightly along with the song, Dustin and Lucas jokingly singing backup. Afterwards, he leaned his guitar up against the wall and blushed as they clapped for him.

"That was good music." El told him firmly, panting a kiss on his lips. Dustin snickered at the face Mike made when she pulled away, his face redder than ever.

"So, presents now, yeah?" Mrs. Sinclair asked. The teens nodded, eager to open and give presents.

Everyone swapped presents, mainly just clothes from the parents, and the kids had done secret Santa for the most part, but made an exception for El and Mike. Will got new crayons from Max, Max got stickers to put on her skateboard from Dustin, as well as a couple wristbands from Lucas that had various quotes or sayings on them, Dustin got candy from Lucas, and Lucas got a new action figure from Will. Mike decided to wait and give El her necklace later, before she leaves, but she did give him hers, along with the beanie from Hopper.

"You do know she's probably gonna steal it right back at some point?" Jonathan asked him, nudging him. "Nancy does the same thing."

"That explains a lot." He muttered, but grinned at El in thanks. "I

don't care, I like it." He put the beanie on, hardly taming his curls, and thanked Hopper.

"So, this was Hoppers idea, *but,* us older teenagers, me, Nancy, and Jonathan, pitched in and helped with the costs." Steve said, handing each of them a small box. They opened them and revealed dog tags. "One has your name and birthday, and the other has your saying, *friends don't lie* and your D and D name. Like, Mike's says Paladin, El is Mage, Max is Zoomer, and so on." He explained. The boys grinned and put theirs on automatically, before thanking them. Meanwhile, El hugged the four while Max just high fived or fist bumped them, and *then* put their on.

There was a knock on the door, so Dustin, being the closest, went to open it.

"What the hell are you doing here?" He just about yelled, pulling everyone's attention away from ripping the wrapping paper off everything they could.

"Here to pick up my little sister, dumbass." Billy retorted. Steve stiffened and looked at Max, who just shook her head a bit. Mike stood up and stood next to Dustin, crossing his arms over his chest.

"She's not going anywhere, ya mullet wearing asshole." Billy glared at him. Mike stared at him expectantly.

"Steve brought her here, and he'll be bringing her back." Lucas had joined the two, and if (Billy's) looks could kill, Lucas would be on the floor.

"I didn't ask you, Sinclair."

"I didn't ask you either, Hargrove." Billy took a step forward and Mike side stepped in front of Lucas.

"Nope, I'm gonna tell you one time. Get the hell out of my house." Billy stared at him, obviously surprised by the forcefulness coming from Mike.

"Don't act like you're the boss and man of the house, Wheeler."

"I kinda am, Hargrove. Last I checked, I'm the only one who lives here that's got a dick, so..." Mike shrugged and he heard someone snort from the living room. "And," He drawled it out, "The Chief's here, and I don't think *your* dad would be too happy if you got arrested for harassing a bunch of kids and their parents, huh? Also, your presence in my house is disturbing Christmas Eve and family time, so if you'd so kindly shut the hell up and get out." Billy made the most ridiculous sound, a half growl, half snort, and turned on his heel. Mike, Lucas and Dustin flipped him off and slammed the door. They looked at each other and burst out laughing.

"Mike!" Lucas shrieked, nearly falling over from laughing so hard. Mike, giggling, stepped back into the living room and looked at Steve dead in the face, sobering quickly.

"Steve?" Everyone stared at him, still a little surprised.

"Uh, yeah?"

"Do you still have that bat?"

"It's in my car, yeah."

"I might need to borrow it for a couple weeks." He started laughing again at the look on Steve's face.

"Christ, kid, I think you might've gotten a little brain damage yesterday." Hopper chuckled.

"Michael." Karen sighed, a small smile playing at her lips.

"What?" He asked, innocently as he sat next to El, who grinned at him.

"I'm afraid that you," She paused for a second, "Are becoming a little badass like I used to be when I was your age. Mullet wearing asshole? Quality insult right there." Mike snorted, throwing his head back.

"You were a badass, mom? I highly doubt that." Nancy shook her head.

"You'd be surprised, actually." Karen winked at her.

"Oh jeez, okay, my God Mike, what in the ever loving hell was *that*?" Dustin cackled, he and Lucas finally rejoining them in the living room. Mike shrugged.

"I have no idea, but I think my life flashed before my eyes." That sent almost everyone into a fit of giggles, all except for Max, who looked worried. She stood up and nudged Mike, silently asking for him to follow her. He raised an eyebrow but did anyways. She lead him to the complete opposite end of the house.

"What's wro-"

"Please never do that again." She interrupted. He looked at her.

"What do you mean? I'm not about to just let him waltz up into my house like that and demand to know where you are."

"Do you not remember how he messed Steve up? Imagine what he'd do to you." She glared at him. "I understand you wanted to stand up to him, but don't. He doesn't scare me anymore."

"I'm gonna say it again, he's not gonna come in my house and act like he owns the place. He doesn't scare me either. Well I mean, he kinda does, but I know he won't mess with me as long as I threaten him with the chief." Mike shrugged at that.

"That's not the point."

"No, I know, but it's bullshit, Max. You're a party member and it's not like I was gonna just sit there and let him take you home or something. I mean, he tried to run us over before you were even friends with us!" She sighed and looked at him. "Besides, I technically *am* the man of the house now so I gotta show my authority around here." She snorted at that.

"Whatever, Nerd, just be careful? And good Lord you've been spending too much time with me. You're catching an attitude." He snorted.

"I've always had an attitude. I mean, have you *met* my sister?" The two walked back to the living room, stopping dead in their tracks when they saw Hopper and Joyce kissing in front of the front door.

"It's about damn time!" Max hollered, whooping and running into the living room. Mike stared, wide eyed for a second as the two adults looked at him sheepishly. He pointed at them accusingly.

"Not in front of the children!" And joined everyone else in the living room.

A couple hours later, once wrapping paper that had once covered the entire floor was cleaned up, and as was the kitchen, to-go plates made and ready to go, everyone left, Hopper and El being the last to leave as usual. Mike pulled El up to his room while Hopper talked to Karen.

"You put my picture up!" She said excitedly, sitting on his bed. He smiled and nodded, opening the top of his drawer and pulling out the wrapped box. He sat across from her and handed it to her.

"I wanted to wait until everyone else left." She smiled at him and nodded, tearing the paper off it as he fiddled his thumbs and bit his lip nervously. She fumbled with the box a little and opened it, her eyes widening immediately. "Um, my mom helped me pick it out but I bought it." He said. "It's one of the first things I taught you and it means a lot to me. I understand if you don't like it, I can take it back or-" She interrupted him with a quick kiss and holding the unclasped chain to him.

"Put it on for me?" She asked sweetly. He blushed and nodded, taking it from her. He made sure the word was facing the right way and put it on. She turned back around and scooted closer to him, hugging him. "It means a lot to me too. Love it. Love you too, Beans." He chuckled and hugged her back.

"I love you too. I'm gonna figure out a nickname, other than El, for you soon. I promise." She let him go and he winked at her. She giggled.

"El! Let's go before the snow starts again!" Hopper yelled. She rolled her eyes and stood, pulling Mike with her.

"Oh! First I want to take a picture of the three of you! El, I love the necklace on you! It's so pretty." Karen said, grabbing her camera.

Mike noticed Hopper's barely there eye roll at the mention of pictures and he nudged him.

"I feel ya, Hop. I hate pictures too." Hopper snorted and nodded.

"Same, kid. Nice choice of necklace, I don't think she'll ever take it off." Mike smiled, wrapping an arm around her waist as Hopper put his hands on each of their shoulders and smiled for the camera.

30. Chapter 30

Welp... Here we are... a month and (almost) a week later...

So, decided not to really have much of a time skip cus I forgot about something I had planned for like after New Years cus I have short term memory loss sometimes BUT I wrote it down in a random ass google Doc and I was going through and deleting ones I didn't need and found it so here we are and sorry for the wait. I'm not making any promises for the next chapter, just know it'll get here eventually XD

Now that this chapter is over with, you guys can send me prompts! (if you want to lmao) It can be anything as long as it goes along with the story line.

All I need is the prompt (ofc) (i'll message you if you have an account if i need more details) and what age they are. Now, if you request something where they're two years older, for example, that request will come later on in the story. I don't want to go all over the place (unless it's maybe flashbacks or something like that, idk). Basically, I'll write whatever you guys wanna see to the best of my ability :)

Does this shit make sense? It does to me but then again half the shit I write doesn't make sense (i rewrite a lot fo stuff, y'all don't EVEN know). If not just review or PM me, or if you have Instagram you can DM me on finnlardmydude XD (you can also send prompts there too if you want)

Saturday, January 19, 1985

Mike found that Hopper was entirely too correct on his statement of El never taking the necklace off. In the (almost) month since he'd given it to her, the few times he's seen her, she'd always have it on. The last time they saw each other was a little over two weeks ago, but that was because they'd gotten snowed in at the cabin and Hopper or his mom wouldn't let Mike even attempt to go out in the snow to see her. That was two weeks ago, and El had gotten sick around the time Hopper managed to dig out a good enough trail to

walk. He'd taken her to the Byers house for a week and refused to let anyone else see her so they wouldn't get sick.

He had talked to El multiple times over the phone, as well as Hopper, who informed him she still wouldn't take the necklace off. Mike had still been a cranky little asshole, according to Nancy, the whole two weeks, but today would change that. Most of the snow had melted, as it'd gotten a little warmer and the sun was shining, though it'd probably snow again before spring arrived.

"Michael!" Karen yelled, multiple times, before her fourteen year old, overly dramatic son trudged his way downstairs, where she and his sisters were waiting.

"What?" He grumbled, plopping down on the couch.

"While you were up there moping about not seeing your girlfriend, Hopper called." Mike perked up, then glared, and *then* his eyes shown with worry.

"Just Hopper? Is El okay?" He asked.

"She's fine, Mike." Nancy said, patting his shoulder. "He said that if you promised to stop being a cranky little asshole, he'd bring her over today, *and* pick up the rest of your little nerd friends, sans Lucas at least. His scrawny ass can walk over here himself." Mike perked up but narrowed his eyes at her at the insults.

"Well you're being an almost legal adult cranky asshole." He retorted and stuck his tongue out at her. Nancy just rolled her eyes. "But I promise," He muttered. "Is that all you wanted? Because if so, I plan to go back upstairs and mope until she gets here." Karen couldn't help but snort at that and shake her head at him. She flicked a curl out of his face.

"No, that's not all. You two sit on either side of him, okay?" She said, and Nancy plopped down to his left and Holly to his right. "Do you remember when I told you on Christmas that I had another present for you? But we had to wait for it to be finished?" The three nodded, but then Holly shook her head.

"I kind of forgot." She said, giggling when Mike poked her in the side. Karen smiled.

"Well, a friend of mine got it for me yesterday and held it until this morning. It's in the garage, but I'll bring it to you." She left without another word and the three siblings looked at each other.

"Do you think it's a little pig?" Holly asked. Mike and Nancy looked at each other and tried to hold back their laughter.

"I'm not sure, Hols, do you *want* a pig?" Mike asked her. She shrugged.

"They're cute when they're babies but then they get ugly. I want one of the ones that stay little." Mike snorted and Nancy pinched his arm.

"Maybe one day, Holly." Nancy told her and Holly just smiled widely and nodded.

"Okay, all three of you close your eyes and Mike, hold out your hands." Karen called, hiding behind the wall coming into the living room.

"Why me?" Mike made a face but did as he was told.

"Because you're sitting in the middle." She replied, her voice noticeably closer. He felt the weight of whatever it was and then froze as it started moving.

"Mom." He said, not opening his eyes. She laughed. "Mom, you didn't."

"Open your eyes and see." He could tell by the excited scream that Holly opened her eyes first, and then the awing coming from Nancy. He opened one eye and looked at the puppy as it squirmed, licking at his face. He opened both eyes and laughed, tilting his head back and holding the puppy, which was a girl, a bit further away so she couldn't reach his face. "I figured that since your father never wanted animals, that we could get one now that he doesn't have a say in it."

"Was this just to spite him or did you actually want a dog?" Nancy asked as Mike held the puppy with one arm and scratched behind her

ears, smiling as Holly giggled when the puppy licked her hand.

"A little bit of both, actually." She said sheepishly. "But I don't care what he thinks. I've always wanted a dog, since I was a little girl, but you know how grandpa was allergic so we couldn't get one. And I never lived on my own long enough to get one." Nancy nodded.

"Does she have a name or do we get to name her?" Mike asked.

"You get to name her."

"You three come up with it then, I'm not good with names."

"You technically named El, you know." Nancy said, looking at him pointedly. He furrowed his eyebrows.

"Not really. All I did was take the El from eleven. It's literally two letters." She snorted and shrugged.

"I like Rosie." Holly said, looking at them.

"Where'd you get that name from?" Karen asked. She shrugged.

"Roses are pretty, and she's pretty." She explained. The three looked at each other and laughed.

"Rosie it is, then." Mike stated, and handed her to Nancy and hopped up. "I'm going to go tell the guys." He said and ran to the basement, where his Supercom was. "Guys, are you there? Over."

"I'm here. Over." Dustin's voice rang. The other three followed soon after.

"What is it, Wheeler?" Max asked. "...Over."

"I got a *dog.*"

Almost immediately after their call had ended, Lucas ran over (he loved puppies for some reason) and almost squealed when he saw her.

"You better be glad your girlfriend wasn't here to hear that." Nancy

told him, an eyebrow raised. He flipped her off and she laughed.

"The others are coming too, right?" Karen asked Mike. He nodded.

"Yeah, Hop's picking them up." He replied, sitting on the couch and watching Rosie attack Lucas' face while he laughed. In the time Mike had called his friends over the Supercom, Holly had fallen asleep for her nap, so she was up in her room.

Twenty minutes later, there was a honking from outside, and the second Mike opened the door, his face was full of dark curls and he almost fell over.

"Mike!" She shrieked. He barely managed to catch her, but did and laughed, hugging her back. "I missed you."

"I missed you too." He kissed the top of her head. Max pretended to gag and promptly walked into the house to find Lucas, whereas she started laughing at his predicament, and Will and Dustin joined in on the laughter. Rosie decided she wanted to sit, and sat on his head. Mike looked at El, who was staring at the puppy with interest. "Have you ever seen a dog before?" He asked. She looked at him, eyebrows furrowed.

"Demo...dog?"

"No, no, she's not at all like them, promise." He told her, and lead her into the living room. He sat them on the floor a few feet away from the others and said, "She's sweet. She might bite you but it wouldn't hurt you, she doesn't know any better." He let out a low whistle and Rosie let out a tiny noise and ran to him, licking and biting at his hand. He snorted and picked her up, holding her out to El. "Here, she won't hurt you. I promise." She hesitated for a split second, but then took her, and jumped when Rosie licked her hand. Mike laughed and she giggled, petting Rosie's back.

"What's her name?" Will asked.

"Rosie." Mike replied.

"You named your dog Rosie?" Dustin asked, snorting.

"Okay first off, you named your turtle Yertle." Mike said.

"Eh, true."

"Is there a second?" Max asked, an eyebrow raised.

"Second, Holly named her."

"Why'd she choose Rosie?" Lucas asked. He shrugged.

"She just said because roses are pretty, and that Rosie was pretty, so..."

"That might be my fault." Will said, making a face. "She asked me to draw her a picture to color the last time I came over, and I drew a bunch of roses. She wondered why and I said that they were pretty." Mike full on laughed and said after a couple seconds,

"I don't know how much longer you're gonna deny it, but Holly has a *serious* crush on you, dude."

Since it isn't mentioned, Rosie is a black lab :) (that's obviously not what Finn's dog is but I just used the name lmao)

31. Chapter 31

The *F* word is ahead so beware! XD And *yes* Mike and Nancy have that conversation, I just don't write it out :)

Monday, February 11, 1985

Mike was falling. It was the quarry all over again, but this time, El wasn't there to save him. She was *gone* because of *him.* He let them take her. He was screaming, terrified screams as he fell through the air. He thought heard Dustin screaming his name, but all he could actually hear was the blood rushing to his head and the wind.

"Mike! Wake up!"

He sat up so fast he knocked foreheads with Nancy, who had shaken him awake.

"Fuck." She muttered quietly, hand on her forehead. "Note to self, don't wake him up like that again." She put her hands on his shoulders and made him look at her. "Hey, Mikey it's okay. It was just a dream." He brought his knees up to his chest and made grabby hands for her, and she hugged him tightly. He was breathing hard, letting out small whimpers as he tried to calm down. She rocked back and forth a little and ran a hand through his hair. "It's okay." Eventually, the whimpers turned into sniffles, so she asked, "Do you wanna talk about it?" He started to shake his head but stopped and nodded. He cleared his throat a little.

"I was falling." He said quietly. "The quarry thing happened again but... El wasn't there because... because I *let* the lab get her and I was going to die. I *know* it wasn't real and that she's fine but..."

"It's scary." She finished. He nodded and wiped at his eyes, sniffing. She squeezed his shoulder gently and looked at the clock. Three o'clock. "We have a couple more hours until we have to get up, do you want me to stay with you?"

"Um... You don't have to." She took that as a yes and stood, pulling

back the blankets some and nudging him until he scooted over enough. She laid back and put her arm across his pillow.

"Lay back." She told him softly. He did as he was told and laid down and she wrapped her arms around him. He curled up a little, pulling the blankets over them. It was a couple minutes of her playing with his hair that he fell asleep, and he didn't make another sound that night.

Despite having fallen asleep pretty easily and not having anymore dreams after the first, Mike was still tired and ready to go back to bed, but he sucked it up and went downstairs for breakfast.

"You okay, Mike?" Karen asked, ruffling his hair. He nodded, taking a bite out of his toast. Rosie hopped her way over to him and nuzzled his leg. He grinned slightly and scratched her behind the ears.

"I had another dream." He said quietly. "First one in like, two months I think."

"Why didn't-"

"Nancy woke me up." He explained quickly. "I don't know how she knew and you didn't."

"I was coming back from the bathroom and heard you yell. It was kinda quiet and I wouldn't have heard it from my room." Nancy said, walking into the kitchen and plopping down beside him.

"Oh."

"Well... if it happens again you can always come to me, okay?" Karen told him. He nodded and gave her a smile. She walked by him to take a sleepy Holly her juice and ruffled his hair again, making it stick up all over the place.

"Mom!" He whined. She chuckled.

"Well, you two better get going or you'll be late." She told them. They both groaned but got their stuff and left in Nancy's car after saying their goodbyes.

"Why do you think you have those dreams, Mike?" Nancy asked.

"I have no idea." He shrugged. "I mean, we all went through some shit, both times, especially Will and Eleven. I didn't get the worst of it or anything but... with these dreams I feel like I did, in a way. I don't know." He sighed.

"Alright, after school we're gonna make hot chocolate and sit in the basement and talk, okay?" He raised an eyebrow at her.

"Talk about what, exactly? The dreams?" She shook her head.

"No, neither of us have shared everything that happened, either time, so that's what we're gonna do. Maybe that'll help." He nodded. She stopped in the parking lot at the middle school. "Okay, go on. I'll see you later, okay?"

"Bye!" He jumped out of the car and jogged over to the rest of his friends. Dustin started laughing. "What?"

"And you guys thought *I* had bad hair at the snowball? Your head actually looks like a damn birds nest." Mike rolled his eyes and flipped him off.

"Oh come on, it's not nearly as bad as yours, Dustin." Will rolled his eyes. "But what happened though, seriously?" Mike huffed in annoyance and crossed his arms.

"Mom." Was his answer.

"Figures. C'mere, Wheeler." Max said. He took a couple steps forward and she started attempting to flatten his hair down a little. "God, when did you start turning into Dustin? Fucking curly ass hair." Mike jumped back a little in surprise at her choice of words. She made a face as Lucas and Dustin started giggling. Max snickered and Will raised his eyebrows. "What? It's not like *you* haven't said it before, Wheeler."

"Yeah, when I had a damn concussion." He shook his head a little. "But I mean I don't care, it just surprised me."

"Why? 'Cause I'm a girl?" She raised her eyebrows.

"Uh, no? Nancy said it this morning because I accidentally head butted her."

"You accidentally head butted your sister." Will deadpanned.

"How the hell did you do that?" Lucas asked. The bell rang and they started making their way inside.

"I'll explain at lunch." He said, breaking off from the group with Will in tow. He heard Lucas start grumbling about excuses but Mike didn't want to be late, so he just rolled his eyes and continued on his way, talking to Will about the supposed partner project they were starting today.

"Do you think he's having dreams again or something?" Lucas asked as he, Dustin and Max sat at their table.

"He's probably dreaming that he ruined El's first Valentine's day or something." Dustin said, stuffing a cookie in his mouth. "Like loses her present or accidentally stabs her with thorns from a rose. Something like that."

"Holy shit Valentine's day is this week." Lucas muttered.

"Mm hm. Did you forget, Stalker?" Max asked, raising an eyebrow. Lucas scoffed.

"Psh, no." He shook his head. She rolled her eyes and looked towards the cafeteria doors for Mike and Will. As she did so, Lucas made an *oh shit* face at Dustin and he choked on his milk.

"You good?" Max asked, turning back around to face them. Lucas just shrugged and Dustin slapped his chest.

"I'm *great*." He managed. She made a face and started eating her own lunch. She jumped when Mike and Will finally sat down, making the loudest possible noise. Mike buried his face in his arms and she looked at the other two. Will just looked smug. Max kicked his knee lightly.

"What's wrong dude?" Lucas asked.

"I... am scarred for life." He said, muffled by his jacket.

"What happened?" Dustin asked.

"Will dropped his pencil last period."

"How did *that* scar you?"

"He said the *F* word when he did it."

"Oh my *God.*" Max started laughing at him saying *the F word* instead of the actual word and Dustin choked again. Lucas snorted.

"I guess Will isn't as innocent as we thought he was."

"You guys won't hear me say it, that's for sure." Will said, shrugging. "I only said it to freak out Mike and it worked."

"You *ass.*" Mike sat up, shaking his head, trying to get his hair out of his eyes.

"You need a haircut." Will said.

"No." Mike shook his head again. "Damn it." He pushed it away with his hand this time and grabbed his bagged lunch, dumping it's content on the table.

"Okay explain why you head butted Nancy this morning." Dustin said after a minute or two.

"I was having another dream and she apparently heard me and tried to wake me up. I sat up and we knocked foreheads."

"Christ." Dustin rolled his eyes. "That's siblings abuse. Is that a thing?" He asked.

"I wish." Max scoffed, stabbing the straw into the milk carton. They were quiet so she looked up and saw them looking at their own food. "What?"

"Sorry I said that." Dustin mumbled.

"What, the siblings abuse thing?" He nodded. "Don't worry about it.

He hasn't tried bothering me since Mike told him he had a dick." Mike snorted at that. "Like he hasn't even *looked* at me."

"That's good." Will said.

"If he bothers you again, we'll get Mike to get Hopper to arrest him." Mike scowled at Lucas. "I mean, he is his father-in-law after all."

"Oh fuck off, Sinclair."

32. Chapter 32

Holy shit another update within 24 hours its a MIRACLE. Anyways, I'm gonna try and work on this story a little more now that I've finished Collision!

It's gonna be a bit before I post the sequel, though I'll be starting it soon. I'm gonna do what I did when I first started writing; write a couple chapters and then post them but I'm gonna KEEP a fucking schedule of once a week since I plan to make them at least 2,000 words or so.

XD

Here we have some more Mike & Hopper bonding, along with a bit of Mike & Flo! XD Valentine's Day will be next chapter!

Hope you like Mike's present!

Tuesday, February 12, 1985

Even though he's done it a couple times before, Mike still felt weird going to the police station. He didn't even get a chance to speak to Flo, other than a quick smile and hello when she called,

"Hey Hop! Mr. Wheeler's here to see you!"

"He can come back!" Hopper called back.

"Go ahead, Sweetie." She nodded towards his office. He smiled at her and made his way to the office. Hopper was taking a sip of coffee when he walked in.

"Hey, Hop."

"Hey, kid. Sit down." Mike sat down and put his book bag on the ground next to him. "You come here right after school?"

"Yeah." Hopper chuckled. "What?"

"I've been wondering when you were gonna come and talk to me. Didn't think it'd be two days before Valentine's day." Mike blushed.

"I kinda forgot that it was a thing." He mumbled. "But I know what I want to get her, but I need your permission first."

"Jeez, kid, you sound like you're asking for permission to marry her or something." Mike's eyes widened and his face turned a bright red.

"N-no." He stuttered. "I, um, I want to get her a kitten."

"A kitten? She did tell you about what they did... there, right?" Mike nodded immediately.

"Yeah, *but* we went to Dustin's house last week and they have a cat, and she fell in love with it. Her, I think? I don't know. Anyways, she actually asked me if she could get one and I didn't know how to respond so I said maybe in the future."

"Okay. And where do you expect to get one?"

"One of my neighbors cat had kittens a couple weeks ago. She said that they'd be ready to adopt by Monday, as in yesterday so... I asked her about it on my way to school this morning and she said they were already trained to use the litter box and everything and were eating solid food and ready to go. And they're free." It was obvious how nervous he was, and how much he wanted to do this for her. It didn't take much to convince Hopper to begin with, so he just laughed.

"Calm down, kid. You can get her a cat. Boy or girl?"

"Really?" Mike's eyes widened a little, a grin forming on his face. "I didn't expect you to go along with it." Hopper snorted. "Uh, probably a girl? I don't know, I asked mom about it and she said the boys spray too much or something." He shrugged.

"Yeah, I'd rather have a girl. Gonna get her fixed as soon as she's old enough though." Mike nodded. Hopper looked at his watch. "I get off at five, a little less than two hours. You wanna hang around here and do your homework or something? And then we can go buy stuff for the cat." Mike nodded enthusiastically.

"I was worried about that the most, other than whether or not you'd say no." He said, pulling his books out of his bag. "Finding time to go get it because tomorrow I have a project that me and Will need to work on at his house and that'll take forever so I'm staying over tomorrow night." He babbled. "And then Thursday is Valentine's day and I'm getting her flowers and candy too so today is like the only day I could go get stuff." Hopper chuckled. "What?"

"Nothing, it's just... there's no doubt in my mind that you're Karen's kid." Mike raised his eyebrows. "You sound just like her, worrying about everything. You're like a mix between her and Joyce."

"Wow." Mike deadpanned, then snickered, "I *do* sound like her. God, I need to chill." He shook his head at himself and sat Indian style in the chair, just barely able to with his long legs, and a peaceful silence fell over them, the only sound being Mike flipping a page over or the scribble of his pencil. After a few minutes, Hopper asked,

"Speaking of your mom, does she know you're here?" Mike nodded, eyes trained on a math problem.

"Yeah, I told her this morning before school. She was cool with it." Hopper snorted and nodded, even though Mike hadn't paid any attention to the movement.

Within an hour, he was done with his homework and had packed everything up, looking around the room. He'd taken his jacket off and was wearing the sweater they'd gotten him.

"You like the sweater, kid?" Mike looked at him and nodded.

"Yeah, it's comfortable. I usually wear the hat too but I was rushing this morning and forgot it."

"Really?" Hopper asked. He nodded again.

"I wear the dog chains too." He pulled them out of his shirt and showed it to him. Hopper grinned.

"Well... good, kid, that's good." Mike was quiet for a couple minutes and Hopper looked up, seeing that Mike had a tiny grin on his face. "What?"

"So... you and Mrs. Byers?" He asked. Hopper blinked at him and Mike wiggled his eyebrows. Hopper started laughing. Mike grinned wider. He hadn't said anything to him about it, even though it's been about a month and a half since he and Max caught them kissing. "What?"

"Sorry, I just thought about what you said when you caught us kissing. *Not in front of the children.*" Mike snickered. "And I'm surprised you've waited this long to ask about it. The redhead," Mike snorted at that, Hopper rarely ever called her by her name, "asked almost immediately after. But, if you must know, we are... kind of dating."

"Kind of dating?"

"I mean... I guess you could say were together."

"Like boyfriend and girlfriend?" Hopper nodded. "Who asked, you or her?"

"What's it to you, kid?"

"Just wondering." Mike shrugged.

"Joyce." He muttered. Mike giggled and Hopper glared at him playfully. "Hey! You shouldn't be laughing, you turd, I already know that it was El who asked you!"

"That's *why* I'm laughing." Mike said, grinning. "El told me that Mrs. Byers is the one who told her that girls could ask boys too, and not just the other way around. She'd asked me why Mrs. Byers wouldn't ask you but I didn't know what to tell her." Hopper snorted.

"When *was* this?"

"My birthday." He replied.

"Figured." Hopper shook his head, shrugging. "Okay kid, since you're so keen on keeping yourself occupied by asking about my love life, I'm gonna put you to work." Mike snickered and nodded. "Do you have decent hand writing?"

"Eh, you can read it so I guess." Hopper nodded.

"Good enough, come on." He stood up and let Mike out to the front, where Flo was sitting, typing away. "Hey Flo? I'm putting him to work since he's being a nosy turd." Mike grinned at her and she chuckled. "He's got decent handwriting so feel free to let him write stuff."

"Gotcha, Hop. Alrighty, Mr. Wheeler, you see that calendar over there?" She nodded towards the one close to the door. He nodded. "Grab it and come over here." She brought a stool out from under the desk and placed it next to her. He came over with it and set it down on an empty space. She handed him a piece of paper with a bunch of dates on it. "I've been meaning to do this since the first of January but I obviously haven't. I want you to write all those dates down for me, starting with whatever comes after today." Mike nodded and got to work, writing down the little notes and schedules or off days for Hopper.

33. Chapter 33

Okay, I know I said it was this chapter, but Valentine's Day WILL BE IN THE NEXT ONE I PROMISE.

I know this one's pretty short but I wanted to get a little something out for you guys, 'cause I've got a lot of work to do on other stories. I've been working on the sequel to Collision, which has yet to be named (I know for a fact that it's gonna be a long ass story XD. Phieilly knows exactly *why* so don't spoil it!). I'm half way done with the next chapter of Phenomenal Mutiny, so be on the look out for that in the next couple days.

I'm also aware that in recent chapters, I've probably written some of the characters a little ooc so I'm sorry about that haha. I'm gonna try and write them the same as I had been so, yeah.

Anyways, sorry again that this is so short but the next one will hopefully be longer!

OH and! THESTRANGERLAB is working on a parody of sorts for PM over on their account, so go check that out! There's only a small trailer type chapter, but it's pretty cool already!

By the time five rolled around, and Hopper emerged from his office, Mike had finished the calendar and was now stapling papers with a look of pure determination on his face. Hopper leaned against the desk and raised an eyebrow at Flo, who chuckled.

"He's a hard worker, I'll tell you that. He's got twice as many papers stapled together in the last hour than I would in three." Hopper snickered. "Thinkin' about keeping him around to help out."

"I will." Mike said, stapling the last two pieces together. He looked at them and shrugged. "If I don't annoy you too much, that is."

"You haven't annoyed me at all, Sweetie." Flo waved her hand at him. "Next time you come in I think I'll have you cleaning." He grinned at her and nodded.

"You got all your stuff packed up, kid?" Hopper asked. Mike nodded and grabbed his book bag from the floor and stood up.

"If you really do need some help, me and the other guys'll help. Just let us know." Mike told Flo, who thanked him as they left. As the got in the truck, Hopper looked at Mike, who was looking around outside. He chuckled and started the truck, pulling out of the parking lot.

"What?" Mike asked.

"I don't know, kid. You know, usually a parent, a *father*, of a teenage *girl*, would absolutely hate their boyfriend. Whether there was a good reason or not."

"Oh so you do hate me?" Mike asked, tilting his head to the side in confusion.

"You're supposed to be smart, Wheeler."

"I am! I get all A's, thank you!" Hopper snorted.

"No, I don't hate you, kid. I thought I would because of the way you acted last year-" Mike frowned. "Because you were a little shit then, but I understand it was hard for you. I actually kinda like you, I just mention you and El will stop with what ever tantrum she's having." Mike snorted and rolled his eyes. "Which is why you're coming over to the cabin after school Thursday. By yourself." Mike raised his eyebrows and looked at him.

"I am? Like, you're willingly letting me come over?" Hopper scoffed.

"Jeez, kid, I always willingly let you come over."

"Yeah, but not by myself." Mike retorted.

"Yeah, well, I know that if you two are alone there's no telling what you might get up to." He gave Mike a pointed look, who blushed and stuttered,

"I w-wouldn't- I wouldn't do anything." He looked horrified. "She doesn't even know anything about... that. All she knows is kissing and

hand holding. And hugging. I won't be the one to tell her about it, that's for sure. Oh my *God.*" He buried his face in his hands.

"She knows some stuff already, I think. She's already got her period, you know." Hopper said, grinning a little at the way Mike cringed away from him. "It's a part of life kid." He chuckled. "She screamed louder than I thought she could, honestly. I had to call Joyce over to handle it and she told her about... that."

"Can we not talk about this?" Mike begged.

"I don't need to give you the talk, do I, Wheeler?"

"No!" Mike's head snapped up and he shook it furiously, his hair flying wildly. "I already *did.* I don't need another one." Hopper snorted and nodded.

"Just so you know, I know you wouldn't push her to do anything." Mike shook his head again.

"*Never.*"

"I wouldn't be so sure about her, though."

"Jesus Christ."

Wednesday, February 13, 1985

"Mike!" Lucas yelled, running up to him at the bike rack. Mike usually reached it first, and the rest came together, but Lucas was by himself.

"Who died?" Mike asked, sitting on his bike. Lucas scowled at him.

"What do I get Max for Valentine's day?" He asked, in an almost whisper.

"Dude." Mike deadpanned, and sighed. "I'm gonna be honest, I'm *not* the person to come to for this kind of thing."

"You know what you're getting El! And you're the only other one who has a girlfriend."

"I don't know what the hell I'm doing, either, dude! She can't even go out on actual dates for a couple more months. And I'm getting her a cat because she wanted a cat."

"So? You still know more than I do." Mike rolled his eyes. "You're getting her flowers and candy too, right?"

"Yeah, but I wouldn't get flowers for Max."

"Why?"

"She doesn't like flowers."

"How do you know?"

"I heard her complaining to Steve about it at Christmas. Pay more attention, dude."

"Fuck." He groaned.

"I guess just take her on a date and give her candy or something? I'd definitely be doing that with El if I could."

"I guess. Can I come over later and ask Nancy for her opinion?" Mike snorted.

"If she's home, yeah. I don't care."

"Cool, cool. Oh! Here they come, act natural!" Lucas immediately leaned against his bike and nearly fell over. Mike face palmed.

"And I thought Dustin was the idiot friend."

"Hey!" Max snickered and shoved Dustin, putting her skateboard down and skating the rest of the way to them.

"Hey Will, did you know that your mom asked Hopper to be her boyfriend?" Mike asked. Will made a face.

"Huh? They're together?" Mike made an *oh shit* face.

"Shit, did you not know?"

"Oooh." The other three giggled. Will grinned.

"Yeah, I knew." Mike let out a breath of relief.

"Why do you keep messing with me, man!" Mike whined.

"He's trying to get you to say fuck." Max said. Mike gave Will the side eye.

"You sneaky little shit." Will grinned and shrugged.

"It's fun to mess with you." Mike pouted and crossed his arms. "I'm sorry."

"No you're not."

"You're right, I'm not."

34. Chapter 34

This is a longer one, yay! Sorry for the long wait! This one's took a minute to get out of me, but here it is! And Valentine's day is actually IN it!

Thursday, February 14, 1985

"I want you to come home right after school, Michael!" Karen told him over the phone.

"What? Why? I'm going over to El's!" He complained.

"I want to drive you, because it's so cold. And I'm making you, her and Hop a lasagna. Plus I'm not about to let you attempt to ride your bike all the way out there with a *kitten*."

"Oh. Right, I forgot about that."

"Yeah, so you won't have to wait very long to see your girlfriend." She cooed.

"Mom!" He groaned and saw Joyce and Will grinning at each other. He gave them the stink eye and they started laughing. "Ugh, I've gotta go, I'll see you later." He grumbled.

"Okay, I love you."

"Love you too." He hung up and trudged back to his seat at the table.

"So, what are your plans for tonight?" Will asked, waiting for Mike to look up at him. He did, and Will continued, "Since you'll be *all alone* with *El,* your *girlfriend* for four *whole hours*?" Mike stared at him for a solid three minutes, before responding.

"You, Will Byers, are a little shit and you're not getting any closer to me saying the F word out of annoyance."

"William!" Joyce gasped dramatically, and Will snickered.

"Okay, I'm just glad you're not mad at me for calling him a little shit." Mike said, chuckling. Joyce smiled.

"I'm not mad because you're right, he is a little shit when he wants to be. So he's been trying to get you to say the F word, huh? Why, may I ask?"

"I don't know!" Mike exclaimed, mouthful of eggs, and she laughed. "I'm pretty sure he's trying to annoy it out of me for the hell of it." Will snickered and shrugged innocently.

"It's fun getting you all riled up. Ask the others." Will eyes widened a bit as if he spilled a secret. And he did. Mike eyed him, and let out a small chuckled.

"I get it now." He sing-songed. "It's not gonna work anymore, Byers. You've gotta try a lot harder than that." Joyce smiled at him and with a shake of her head, patted the top of Will's head.

"I fear for your nerves, Mike." He let out a sigh.

"Same."

The school day went by pretty well, other than his friends trying to get on his nerves, but he didn't let it get to him, not giving them the satisfaction.

"Did you ever figure out what you're doing for Max?" Mike asked as Lucas strutted towards him. "And what's with the walk, dude? You look like you're doing a fancier version of the chicken dance." Lucas flipped him off, but nodded.

"Yeah, I'm gonna take her to Benny's old restaurant. His brother owns it now, he kept the name." Mike nodded, he'd heard Hopper talking about that.

"Yeah, I'm glad he did. Is that all you're doing?" He asked.

"We're gonna go see a movie, I think. If she wants to, at least. I took your advice and *didn't* get her flowers, and gave her chocolate and a skateboarding teddy bear." Mike snorted. "She ate all the chocolate in

first period."

"Figures." He said. "And where the hell did you find a skateboarding teddy bear?"

"Walmart. There are strange things in there." Mike snorted again and nodded in agreement.

"So, Wheeler, what exactly are your intentions with El tonight?" Max asked, skating up to the two of them, Dustin and Will a few feet behind her. Mike rolled his eyes.

"Not much, ya know? We're getting her a cat, which we're gonna pick up on the way, and eat the lasagna my mom's made for me, her and Hopper."

"Dude, sucks to suck." Dustin said, clapping him on the back. Mike raised an eyebrow at him, confused. "You've gotta have a Valentine's date with the Chief, you dip."

"Mike's gonna be alone with El for *four* whole hours, guys." Will said, wiggling his eyebrows. Dustin choked on his spit and Max and Lucas gasped, before laughing.

"You know for a fact that we're not gonna do anything." Mike said, shrugging. "I don't *care* about that. I just like being with her. Besides, we're only *fourteen*."

"Ugh, don't get all sappy on us, Wheeler. You better go get her cat." Lucas snorted so hard it had to hurt and Mike rolled his eyes at him.

"Get your mind out of the gutter, *Lukey*." Mike was on his bike and peddling away before Lucas had a chance to react, laughing his ass off.

Before he went home, though, he stopped by the florist to buy flowers for not only El, but his mom and sisters. He knew his mom *loved* roses, so he figured he'd get the three of them a single pink rose each and a bouquet of red for El. And that's what he did, and stopped by Melvald's to get Holly some chocolate, knowing she wouldn't really care for the rose. It's the thought that counts, though.

Karen didn't expect to get anything for Valentine's day, but there was a bouquet of red roses on her door step this morning, after the kids were gone to school and Holly up in her room. It didn't say who it was from, but she *knew* who it was, and couldn't help but feel giddy.

And when her son brought home a pink rose for not only her, but his sisters too- along with chocolate- she felt like her heart would burst.

"Thank you, Mike. I love it." She said, squeezing him so tight the two heard his bones crack. He chuckled.

"Jeez, mom." She let him go and grinned at him, before calling up the stairs for Nancy- who had arrived about twenty minutes before Mike- and Holly to come down. Holly practically bounded down the stairs, and was immediately curious as to why Mike held his hands behind his back. He kept spinning as she followed him, trying to get a glimpse, but it didn't work. "I'll show you in a second, Hols." He chuckled. She pouted but nodded. Nancy finally came down, half of her hair pinned up- in a way that made Mike think of the Grinch- with the rest down and curled. He bit back a grin when he saw her.

"What is it?" She asked.

"Mike wanted to give you two something." She said. "But wait a second, okay?" She told Mike, who raised an eyebrow and nodded. She came back with the camera and he let out a groan. "What? This is worth documenting!" She said, holding it up. "Okay now do it." Mike rolled his eyes but held out the two roses to them, and Karen snapped a picture that would end up on the mantel for years to come. A grin spread across Holly's face as she realized what it was, and Nancy's shocked smile, her eyes crinkling on the outside corners, and Mike's smile that could light up the whole room- at their reactions. Karen wished someone had been there to get *her* reaction, but she hoped there would be a next time. And there would be. She got a picture of Holly and Nancy both in the middle of pouncing on Mike, and the third where they were hugging, and she couldn't help the tears or the smile on her face.

"You know all the rules Hopper's given you, right, Michael?" Karen said as she slowed to a stop. Mike let out the most teenager-ish sigh

yet.

"Yes, mom." He let out a small chuckle, picking the kitten up with one hand and cuddling her to his cheek. "We're probably just gonna stare at her for the next four hours and eat lasagna." Karen gave him a look, which he did back to her and she laughed.

"Quick question." She said as he got out of the car.

"Hm?"

"How do you expect to carry the food, the bag, flowers, the cat *and* try not to spoil the surprise?"

"Shit."

After a couple minutes, the kitten basically decided for him and wiggled her way down into his coat pocket, which had more then enough space for her. Mike looked at his mom and the two laughed. He kissed her cheek.

"I'll see you later, mom, love you!" He called as he walked away, down the now familiar trail.

"Love you too!"

It took a little longer to get there, as he was trying not to drop anything or jostle the kitten too much, but he eventually did, and if he hadn't been carrying so much stuff, she'd have tackled him. Which she basically did once his arms were free. He chuckled and hugged her back just as tight. When she finally let him go, he gave her the flowers with a shy smile. Her eyes lit up even more- if that was possible- and she kissed him on the cheek before rushing off to put them in water.

"I have a surprise for you." He told her, leading her to the couch once she finished her task. He gently pushed her shoulders and she plopped down, looking up at him. "Do you have your blindfold?" She raised her eyebrows and nodded, taking it out of her pocket. He chuckled, of course it was literally *on* her being. "Can you put it on just for a minute or so? I have to set up a little bit of stuff and I'll let you know when to take it off." She nodded and gave him a bright

smile, before tying it around her head.

He made sure she couldn't actually see and went on to set up some of the stuff he'd brought in the bag. Cat toys, food and water bowl, and actual cat food. He almost freaked out for a second, thinking he forgot about the litter box and litter, but then remembered that Hopper hid it outside the cabin somewhere, under a black tarp where he kept fire wood. He made a mental note to go get it before she pissed and shit everywhere, because he did *not* wanna clean it up. The kitten let out a tiny meow, as if sensing it.

"Shhh!" He shushed her, picking her up gently and holding her up to his face. She licked his nose and he made a face. He put her on the floor for a second, and shrugged his jacket off, before picking her back up and making his way over to El. He sat next to her, and nudged her. She grinned. "Okay, you can take it off."

"Who were you shushing just now?" She asked as she pulled it off, and her eyes nearly popped out of her head when she saw the fluffy white cotton ball in his hands. Only it wasn't a cotton ball. It was a *kitten*. The look on her face almost made Mike regret the decision, but then she grinned. "Is it mine?" She whispered, as if someone would come and take the kitten. He nodded. "Really?"

"She sure is. Here." He held her out to him and El took her, holding her with both hands as she held her up to her face, nuzzling her with her cheek.

"She's so soft. And pretty." She said, looking at him. He grinned. "You got her for me?"

"It's your Valentine's day present." He told her. She leaned over and kissed him unexpectedly, and he almost forgot to kiss back. She pulled away almost as quick as she leaned in, and stood up.

"I'll be back." She told him, almost running to her room, still holding the kitten. He chuckled, leaning back on the cushions. She came back with the kitten perched on her shoulder, looking down at him. He couldn't help but laugh at that.

"I see you're a pirate, now, huh? You've got a parrot and *everything*."

She giggled and handed him a small, wrapped box that had an envelope on the top. She sat back down and the kitten plopped down on her legs and curled up.

"Open the box first. Then the envelope right after, no questions." She told him. He laughed nodded and did as she asked. There was a tape sitting in the box, and he raised an eyebrow, but opened the envelope. Inside it, was a bright and colorful drawing, a pretty *good* drawing, of what looked like the two of them standing outside, the sunset behind them. "Will drew it for me. I drew the trees though, and colored everything in." He smiled at her, and then read the writing in the top left corner.

Johnathan helped me make you a mixed tape. It had some of your favorite songs, and songs I like that remind me of you. I hope you like it. Love, El

He smiled at her.

"I can't wait to listen to it." She smiled happily, and he pecked her on the cheek. His stomach growled, loudly, and she made a face.

"Hungry?" She asked.

"Uh, a little bit."

"Snack? Or lasagna?" She asked.

"Snack for now." He told her. She nodded and stood up, putting the kitten in her place and petting her head, before hauling Mike up and pulling him to the kitchen with her.

"Do you want eggos?" She asked. He grinned and nodded, and she went to the freezer and pulled out the box. She froze for a second, and then shut it, looking at Mike. "Does she have a name?" He shook his head.

"She's all yours, El, you can name her."

"Eggo?" She asked. He chuckled.

"If that's what you want, of course." She grinned.

"Her name is Eggo."

The two spend the next four hours eating eggos, playing with Eggo as she got used to her surroundings, watched movies, and cuddled on the couch until Hopper got home, when they finally ate the lasagna and laughed as the kitten crawled all over Hopper's front and back, determined to get on his nerves already, until Hopper takes Mike home. It turned out to be the *best* Valentine's day Mike's ever had, and the *greatest* first Valentine's day El could have ever imagined.

35. Chapter 35

I'm gonna start trying (keyword: trying) to actually make these longer now, and have multiple days in one chapter rather than carry one on for like five chapters XD. Like three days of spring break is in this chapter, your welcome.

Also, I did some research about growth spurts because SOMEONE likes to correct me on my mistakes WAY too often and they KNOW who they are. There are some wild ass comments and reviews and shit on some stuff where guys are like really tall, some being 6'2 at 16 which is understandable because both my brothers were at 6 feet by the time they were 15 (they kept getting taller btw but idk how tall they are now). Some guys are 6'8 now and said they were 6 foot at 14 but I'm not sure I believe that, but I've got shit to back it up so don't judge me on how tall Mike is getting (and how fast), because we all know Finn is tall as shit now and will be tall as shit in the future, so of course Mike's gonna be tall af.

That's all. Love you guys :D

P.S. I don't fucking know how the ever loving hell some of you writers out here manage to write a couple thousand word chapters in only a couple days, it takes me like a week to get three sentences, three hundred (words) on a good day. Like what the shit.

Monday, April 1, 1985

Today is the first (actual) day of Spring Break, if you don't count the weekend, and the Party were probably more excited than they should've been. Max didn't understand how they could call it spring break when it barely went above sixty five degrees, but other than that, she was glad to get out of the house rather than stay holed up in her room when she wasn't with the Party.

"Hey Mike! Mike, Mike, Mike!" Dustin yelled at the top of his lungs as he busted in Mike's bedroom, the rest of the party, including El,

following behind him. Mike was still knocked out, despite Dustin's yells. He was lying on his back, limbs spread out across the bed starfish style, snoring quietly. Dustin was about to start yelling again, when Mike furrowed his brows, shifting slightly. The group looked at each other, thinking he might've been having another nightmare. He grimaced, just about proving their point. What they thought was a nightmare was just a sneeze so powerful it woke him up and pushed him somewhat in a sitting up position. Max slapped a hand over her mouth to keep from making any noise.

"Shit." He muttered. He sneezed again and the one who burst out laughing wasn't Max or any of the guys. It was El. She full on laughed her ass off, especially when Mike yelped and nearly fell out of the bed upon hearing it. That had caused everyone else to start laughing. He threw the blankets off his legs and stood up, glaring at them. "I have to pee." He grumbled, walking past them and into the hallway. El collapsed on his bed, still giggling a little, and was joined by Max and Will, while Dustin sat on the floor and Lucas stood behind Max. Mike came back and Lucas was almost immediately irritated.

"What the fuck, dude? Literally a week ago we were finally the same height. Now you're like two inches taller." Mike made a face but shook his head.

"Can you even grow that much in a week?" Will asked.

"Doubt it." Mike muttered, turning his attention to El, finally, who was looking at him, a bright smile on her face.

"Good morning!" She quipped. He smiled and sat next to her, running a hand through his hair and kissing her cheek.

"Good morning."

"Studies show that a kid can grow half an inch a night during a growth spurt." Dustin said, crossing his arms at a pouting Lucas.

"I haven't grown two inches in a week, Lucas." Mike said, rolling his eyes.

"Michael!" Karen called.

"Yeah?" He called back.

"You need to walk Rosie! I'm taking Holly to a friends house!" Mike groaned.

"Okay!" He called back, and then grumbled, "Why can't Nancy do it? She's not just my dog."

"I mean she basically is, dude." Lucas said.

"Do you wanna take a puppy on a walk and then pick up her shit?"

"Point taken." Mike stood up and went to his closet, looking back at what they were wearing. Still long pants and a thin jacket.

"I'll be glad when it gets warm again." He sighed, yanking a shirt and pair of pants off the hangers and going back to the bathroom.

"He's gonna regret saying that." Will said. "He complains more about the heat than the rest of us." Max snorted.

"You people don't know what heat is." She said, standing and going around the room, looking at everything that wasn't in a drawer. "I've never been in here, I don't think." She said, glancing back at the others. "Not as nerdy as I thought it'd be. Why the hell does he have a bunk bed?" She made a face.

"He bugged his mom until they got him one. It was so we could sleep there instead of on the floor or something." Lucas told her. She nodded.

"That's smart, I guess." She said. She was looking at the picture frames when Mike came back in. "Hey Wheeler, you should really update these pictures."

"I know, I was saying something about that the other day. I'm gonna ask Jonathan next time I see him." He told her, grabbing his shoes.

"You need to upgrade the bed too." She said. Mike side eyed her.

"Tell that to my mom. She refuses to believe I'm getting taller. Do you guys wanna come with me or stay here 'til I get back?" He asked. El

stood up immediately, eager to walk Rosie- which she loved to do. The others agreed to go with him and put their shoes back on as Mike grabbed the stuff he needed and put Rosie on her leash. El made grabby hands for it and he snorted, handing it to her and ushering them out of the house, locking the door behind him.

"Where do you usually take her for her walk?" Will asked.

"I just let her drag me around. Like she's doing with El, there." He motioned towards his girlfriend, who was a couple feet ahead of them, following Rosie around every where she went. He sighed, "I just wish mom would have a fence put up or something."

Twenty minutes later, Dustin and Max would not quit complaining,

"There is literally an entire neighborhood for her to shit and pee in, why won't she do it?" Max grumbled.

"Now you know how I feel!" Mike retorted. "At least I have you guys with me, I usually take Holly with me and she makes me carry her majority of the time."

"You? With those noodle arms?" Dustin said, eyebrows raised. Mike glared at him and punched him in the shoulder. "Ow! You just might be getting some muscle picking her up, then, jeez." Mike rolled his eyes and walked ahead to join El, who immediately grabbed his hand and smiled a him. He smiled back.

"Kittens are easier." El said, matter of factly, as she and Max watched the boys try and catch Rosie. Dustin had wanted to walk her too, so El handed the leash over to him and five minutes later, he'd accidentally dropped it and now the four of them were trying to get her. Max snorted as Mike nearly ran into a tree.

"Are they really?" Max asked, turning to her. El nodded.

"You still have to clean up their poop, but we have a litter box and a pooper scooper to clean it with." She explained.

"True."

"She tries to climb the curtains a lot." El told her. "And I have little marks on the backs of my legs from her chasing me as I walk, see?" She leaned down and pulled up her pants leg to show her.

"Sounds like a pest to me." El shook her head.

"She's just playing. She doesn't know any better." She said, reciting the exact words Hopper said to her. Max chuckled.

"I guess, yeah. I'm surprised I haven't met this cotton ball yet."

"Just me, Mike and dad have. Mike carried her in his pocket all the way to the cabin and then she crawled all over dad. Mike took a picture of her sitting on his head." Max snickered, but grinned. She hadn't heard El talk this much, ever. She barely said an entire sentence when they first met, and now she says multiple.

"Next time we hang out you should bring it, show the other guys too." Max told her. El looked at her and tilted her head a little.

"Okay. Do you want to have a sleepover this week?" She asked. Max's eyes widened, surprised.

"Um, with me?" She pointed at her self. "At my house?" El shook her head.

"No, at the cabin. Hopper said we could since it's spring break and if your mom agreed."

"Oh, good. We would have the worst time at my house." She let out a breath of relief. "But sure! I'll ask my mom later, when I get home." They heard a car honking and looked ahead of them, noticing it was Hopper's cruiser. They made their way up the street as the boys, having finally caught Rosie, stood around the side, talking to Hopper.

"I need to talk to you Wheeler," Hopper said, and Dustin and Lucas ooh'd and gave him knowing looks. "It's nothing bad, you turds. I just need his help with something, so why don't you three skedaddle and distract red and curly over there for a few minutes?" Mike snorted at the nicknames, and looked at the other three, who groaned and made their way towards the girl. Rosie barked and jumped up on the side of the cruiser and Hopper reached an arm out, scratching her behind

the ears. "Why are you four so out of breath?" He asked.

"Dustin dropped the leash." Mike explained.

"Ah, figures. Anyways, I need you to do me two favors."

"Okay." Mike nodded.

"I need you to find out what El's favorite color, or colors, are."

"Why?"

"You'll find out. Just ask her, acting like you're curious."

"Okay?"

"And the second favor, you wanna do something this week? I can tell you what I'm planning- and what the actual other favor is- then." Mike made a face, but nodded slowly.

"Yeah, I'm not doing anything except hang out with those guys." He motioned his head towards the rest of the Party.

"Okay, good. But it's nothing to worry about, I just have a surprise, a *big* surprise, for El, and I need your help. And eventually the other four too, probably." Mike still looked confused, but nodded.

"Okay. Just let me know, I guess, so I can tell them." Hopper nodded.

"Alrighty then! Let's meet with them up there so I can talk to El and then I'll be out of your hair." Mike snorted and nodded. Hopper drove slowly next to him to match his speed, and stopped again when they reached the group. El walked up to him with a grin.

"Can Max stay over tomorrow night?" She asked. The boys looked at Max, who shrugged.

"Yeah. As long as she gets permission." Hopper nodded. El grinned at Max, who grinned right back at her.

Tuesday, April 2, 1985

Lucas hadn't been far from the truth. Mike grew nearly two inches in a week, and the day after, Mike was feeling the effects, and nearly drew his mom and sisters up the wall with his complaining about his legs hurting. Karen had just given him Tylenol and some extra to take with him to the Byers and sent him away.

"I told you he grew two inches! Look at this fucker, his legs are a mile long now!" Lucas exclaimed.

"And you guys call me dramatic." Dustin deadpanned to the other four members of the party, who just shrugged.

"Language!" Hopper yelled. "I'm telling you, kids gonna be tall as me by the time he's sixteen at this rate." He muttered as he dug through a bag in the kitchen. Lucas had demanded he find a measuring tape so they could see how tall Mike was now. He found it and gave Joyce a smile before going back into the living room.

"Stand up, Wheeler." Mike groaned but got up and stood against the wall, barefoot. After a couple seconds, Hopper asked,

"How tall were you the last time you checked?"

"Five four." He muttered.

"Sinclair, you're right." Hopper said. "According to this, he's only a few centimeters away from five six."

"Ha! I told you!" Mike rolled his eyes.

"Can you see how tall I am?" El asked quietly, looking at Hopper. He nodded and she hopped up, a grin on her face, and stood in the same spot Mike had.

"Five three, kiddo! Jesus, you're gonna be some tall kids, aren't ya?"

"Tall adults Hop!" Dustin yelled back, but then ran in asking for him to measure him too.

He ended up doing it for everyone.

Wednesday, April 3, 1985

"Mike! Hopper's here to pick you up!" Nancy yelled.

"I know!" Mike yelled back, pulling on his shoes. He grabbed his wallet- he didn't know whether or not he'd need it so he brought it just in case- and flew down the stairs, saying goodbye to his mom and sisters before they could ask questions.

"Jeez, Wheeler, where's the fire?" Hopper joked as Mike got in the cruiser. Mike snorted.

"They ask too many questions." He told him.

"Figured." He started driving and it was quiet for a few minutes, Mike just looking out the window or picking at his cuticles.

"How'd the sleepover go?" He asked, eventually.

"Better than I expected. I think they're best friends now." Mike snorted. "They played with the cat- or kitten, as El corrects me- and watched a bunch of movies. Pretty sure they stayed up real late because they were both still knocked out when I left." Mike glanced at his watch, seeing that it was ten thirteen. El was usually an early riser, so this was shocking to him.

"Wow."

"I know." Hopper chuckled. "I think Max is gonna stay another night so you won't be getting those two out of the cabin for anything. " Mike snorted. "D'you ever find out her favorite colors?" He asked, glancing over at him.

"Yeah, she likes the… pastel colors, I think she said. Like pink and blue and green? Not sure what pastel is but I think it's what mom puts on Holly most of the time." Hopper snorted.

"It is." He replied. "Okay, the reason I wanted you to come with me today was so I could show you something, and you'll see in about two minutes. Anyways, you know how Joyce and I both got hush hush money from the government?" Mike nodded.

"I've heard you guys mention it to each other, but that's it. I figured you had, though."

"We got a good sum, too. A couple zeroes each." Mike raised his eyebrows. "And do you remember when I told you that I was gonna be looking for a house after new years? Well, I finally did." He turned left and almost immediately after, turned right, into a long driveway, leading up to a huge two story house with a *giant* front yard.

"Holy…" Mike whispered, eyes wide as he stared at it. Hopper chuckled.

"Watch it, those eyes might pop out." Mike rolled them at that but laughed.

"I can't believe you bought a house."

"Well, believe it! Wanna go check it out?" He asked. Mike nodded, and was out of the car and in front of it before Hopper had even opened the door. He snickered and shook his head, slamming it behind him and digging in his pocket for his keys and unlocked the door, letting Mike walk in first. The first thing Mike noticed was how big the foyer was, a giant staircase to the left of him that went straight up to the second floor, and you could look down into the foyer from the top. Past the stairs to the right, was a doorway that let into the kitchen, and another doorway right across from it that was the living room, which was bigger than expected. It was pretty bare, still, other than a shit ton of newspaper stacked in the living room.

"When you said you were looking for a house, I figured it would be a one story house with like, two rooms."

"I want El to have the best life from here on out, and I think she'll love this. Plus I can afford it so…" He shrugged. "And there are four bedrooms."

"Seriously?" Mike asked, wide eyed. Hopper nodded.

"Yep, and three bathrooms, the master, another full bathroom on the top floor, and then a half bathroom down here, it's that room between the living room and dining room. Plus a laundry room on

the other end of the house where the back door is."

"Jesus."

"Kid, it's not that much bigger from your house."

"Yeah it is! The rooms are bigger, man! And the yard?" He made a face.

"Wait until you see the back. There's a pool."

"No way."

"Yes way."

"Dude!" Hopper laughed.

"Go check out the rest of the house, I'm gonna go out on the porch and take a smoke break and wait for Joyce, Will and Jonathan to get here."

"They're coming over?" Mike asked, about to go up the stairs. Hopper nodded.

"Yeah kid, they're moving in too." Mike's eyes widened for what seemed like the hundredth time today. "We're all gonna go get paint and start painting while El has a distraction. Do you wanna go back home or help? You don't have to if you're not up to it."

"Hell yeah I'm up to it! Honestly, I'd rather paint than be in the arcade all day every day like Lucas and Dustin wanna do."

"You kids are ruining your eyes looking at those screens so damn much."

"You sound like a dad."

"Because I am a dad!"

"Oh, speaking of dads! You should call Steve, I'm sure he'll come help too. He's probably got brushes and stuff too." Mike grinned cheekily and Hopper snorted, nodding.

"I might just do that, kid."

Thursday, April 4, 1985

"I can't believe you roped us into painting a house." Dustin grumbled.

"Oh shut it, Dustin. You should be happy to help. This is for two of your best friends, so quit whining." Steve snapped, flicking his paintbrush at him. He didn' give a shit about a paint war anymore, as he already got paint in his hair.

"It's not *my* fault you got paint in your hair."

"Piss or get off the pot you shits!" Mike yelled from the other room. "Get to work dammit!" Hopper busted out laughing. "What?" Mike asked innocently, looking at Hopper.

"The fact that you just said that, kid."

"His grandma says it a lot." Joyce said. "I remember one year when she was visiting for Christmas she said that to Ted at least fifty times in one sitting." Hopper snorted. Mike let out a quiet sigh and went back to work. The two looked at each other, and Mike glanced at them.

"What?" He asked.

"Sorry for bringing him up." Joyce said, biting her lip. Mike waved her off.

"I don't care about *that*. I just wish grandma would come visit. I haven't seen her in like, two years now, I think."

"Why's that?" Hopper asked. Mike shrugged.

"She hated my dad. *Hates* him, and the last time she was over they had it out and she hasn't been back since. We've gone to visit her, me, mom, Nancy and Holly, but that stopped pretty quickly because it was expensive."

"Does she know that they're divorced?" Joyce asked. Mike made a

face.

"You know what? I'm not even sure. I'm gonna ask mom when I get home."

There was a loud bang, followed by laugher and Steve's furious yell,

"Goddammit Dustin! Get your ass back here!" Dustin ran through the foyer and down the hallway to the kitchen, a paint covered Steve chasing after him. Hopper sighed and Mike snickered.

"I'm gonna go make sure Henderson isn't murdered."

I didn't write the sleepover because it's been written so many times already, but let's just say that they ate a bunch of candy, played with Eggo, ate pizza that Hopper brought, and stayed up late talking about their boyfriends.

36. Author's Note

So, uh, it's been over month since I last updated this story and I'm SO sorry. I have the worst writers block for this story, so as of right now, I'm putting it on hiatus. It won't be *too* long, maybe another month at the least, but I'm NOT giving up on this story! I have plans for the future of the story, but as of right now I got nothing. I'm sorry and I'll be back as soon as I can! Love you guys!

37. Chapter 36

This was something else to write. Sorry it's so depressing. Also, sorry for the long ass hiatus, I hope I'll be good now, for a few chapters at least sksks.

The reactions probably aren't the best, I'm not the best at writing sad stuff like this.

Oh yeah, this gets sad af at the end.

And Max's dad isn't the best either so yeah.

Saturday, May 11, 1985

"Wheeler."

"Yeah?"

"Stop growing."

"Hopper?"

"What, kid."

"I *can't*."

"Your girlfriend literally will *not* stop whining to me about how much taller you are than her."

"It's not like I can actually stop growing. If I could I would've like... three weeks ago."

"You're gonna blow away in the wind. You're too skinny."

"I eat constantly. I eat more than you."

"Excuse me?" Mike laughed and Hopper glared at him.

"That was a very... interesting conversation." Will said, looking at Dustin, who shrugged.

"Are they always arguing like that?" He asked. Will nodded.

"Yep." Mike turned around and stuck his tongue out at them, then grinned.

"Can you guys believe we actually convinced El to stay with Mrs. Byers and Nancy?"

"Kinda, I mean... she loves hanging out with them."

"Not the point." Miked waved Dustin off. "And she wasn't suspicious when we told her to take most of Eggo's shit with her." Hopper snorted. "Pun very much intended."

"You don't think she's gonna be mad that we haven't told her about the house?" Hopper asked, glancing at Mike, who shook his head, fiddling with one of Eggo's feather toys. She loved them.

"She likes surprises, and I think she'll like this one. Especially since she won't have to do any of the work." They laughed.

"She's so lazy." Dustin said.

"Shut up." Mike flicked him. "Don't talk about her like that." He gave Dustin a look that told him he was kidding... sort of.

"Protective ass."

"Language." Hopper muttered. "Even though El can protect herself *and* Mike, I'm glad you're protective of her."

"Of course." Mike nodded, shifting in his seat so he could stretch his legs out. "I mean... I love her." He said softly.

"I know, kid." Mike heard his friends snickering in the back but rolled his eyes and didn't say anything.

They soon arrived at the house, where a rented moving van sat out front with Steve, Max and Jonathan sitting on the front porch.

"I thought she was grounded?" Mike turned to look at Lucas, who nodded but looked confused as well. Hopper parked and they got out,

Lucas jogging over to Max, who pulled him inside the house. They all looked around at each other before shrugging.

"Okay, you little shits just carry the... non-heavy stuff, and us grown men will carry the furniture."

Hopper had had Karen and Joyce- her obviously, she was living with them after all- both to help pick out some new furniture. Most of the stuff was crammed into the large moving truck, but the rest was on a trailer connected to Steve's car.

"I just want you to know, Steve, that you are full of shit and as of right now, are no longer my second mom." Dustin said sternly, walking past him swiftly and pulling on the handle until the door open, nearly hitting Steve. The older teen closed his eyes and counted to ten, before opening them and making his way to his truck to get the dressers behind his car.

"You're not a grown man until you have a job, your own place, and a lot of other stuff, Harrington." Hopper told him, lighting a cigarette and taking a drag. Steve just grumbled and lifted up some shelves.

Nearly three hours later, they had everything in the house and most of the boxes unpacked- except for clothes and toiletries- and Joyce had arrived after an hour to tell them where everything went. Once they were done, Max finally told them what was going on- after having acted pretty weird the whole day. Hopper had left to pick up El and her things from the Wheeler house.

The five friends were sitting outside in the grass near the pool when she told them.

"Billy and Neil were having a... an argument. It wasn't a very good one so... my mom told me to leave." She said. She hadn't really talked much, she stuck close to Hopper for some reason.

"Were they fighting?" Will asked. "Like... actually fighting?" She nodded.

"I'm worried about my mom." She said, biting her lip. "She tries to get

between them when they fight and-and one time she got hit."

"That's not good." Dustin said.

"No shit." She glared at him.

"Sorry," He mumbled. Lucas squeezed her shoulder gently and she sighed, running a hand through her hair.

"She'll be okay." Mike told her. He had a weird feeling in his stomach as he told her this. "She can take care of herself." Max nodded. She didn't look convinced either.

Fifteen minutes later Hopper pulled up in the driveway with a very confused El.

"Where are we?" She asked, looking at him. Eggo pawed at her face. "No." She scolded and turned back to him.

"Just thought I'd show you this house." He told her. She furrowed her brows but shrugged as he got out and joined him, putting Eggo on her shoulder and following behind him closely. Everyone else had gathered in the foyer to surprise her. As soon as Hopper open the door, everyone yelled surprise and she shrieked, causing a light bulb to explode. He swore under his breath as El put a hand over her heart, and flinching slightly at Eggos nails in her shoulders.

"What... what is this?" She asked, tilting her head to the side.

"This is our new house." Hopper said, smiling at her. Her mouth dropped open.

"No way." She nearly whispered.

"Yes way." He grinned at Mike when he said that, and Mike snorted. El looked at him, basically for confirmation, and he nodded. Her eyes widened and she took Eggo off her shoulder, handing her off to Mike and immediately throwing herself at Hopper.

"I love how she gave the cat to him." Joyce said quietly. Mike grinned back at her and held Eggo up to his face. She licked his nose and reached her front legs out, and he put her on his shoulder.

"Thank you." El mumbled into Hopper's chest. He chuckled.

"Of course, El. I figured it was time to get you out of the cabin." She gasped and pulled away.

"What's gonna happen to it?" She asked, eyed wide.

"You can visit it any time, El." He promised. "Just like it was handed down to me, it'll be handed down to you one day." She grinned widely. "Wanna check it out?" She nodded excitedly. She let him go completely and went over to Mike, leaning on her toes and giving him a quick kiss- that Dustin pretended to gag at and Hopper rolled his eyes at- and scratched Eggo behind the ear as she greeted him.

"Are you happy?" He asked her a little while later. The two and the rest of the party had moved her furniture around the way she wanted it and were watching a movie in the living room. Hopper had to leave about thirty minutes ago after receiving an apparent *urgent* call from Flo.

"Very." She said with a grin, cuddling further into him as she turned back to the TV.

A movie and a half later, Hopper walked in the door, immediately scanning the room for a certain redhead.

"Max." He said quietly. Everyone turned to look at him.

"Yeah?"

"Can I talk to you?" She furrowed her brows but nodded, standing and following him into the kitchen. They sat facing each other at the table. "I... I don't know how to tell you this." He said finally.

"What is it?" She asked, eyes widening slightly. "Did something happen with Billy and Neil?"

"Um, sort of." He took a breath. "There was an... altercation of sorts. Involving your mom." Her eyes were wide as saucers now.

"I... What happened?"

"According to Billy, he and Neil were fighting and your mom tried getting between them. They were standing near the staircase."

"Hopper..." She said warningly. "I know you're not about to tell me what I think you are." He voice cracked slightly. He bowed his head slightly.

"Neil... he pushed her. She rolled down the stairs and- and broke her neck."

"No..." Max whispered, shaking her head. "Hop-" She cut herself off, covering her mouth with her hand.

"She was already gone when the paramedics arrived. They did what they could, but..."

"Say it." Max said harshly. "Say the exact words you would tell someone else." Hopper sighed.

"Max... your mom is- is dead."

"No!" She yelled, smacking the table. "You're lying! I was just with her this morning!"

"I'm not lying, Max, I-"

"No, no, no!" She yelled, standing up so fast the chair fell with a bang and everyone rushed in to see what was happening. "She's not dead! She can't be!"

"I'm *so* sorry, Max." Hopper said softly.

"You're *sorry*? *Sorry*? It's not your fault! It's mine!"

"I don't- I don't know exactly what's going on but-" Lucas started, "whatever it is, it's not your fault."

"My mom is dead!" She cried. "I was with her this morning and now she's dead because I wasn't there, Lucas." She gazed at the group of friends, eyes stopping on Mike, who was wide eyed, just like the rest of them. "You told me she was gonna be okay, Mike! Why'd you lie?"

"Max, I didn't- I didn't think..." He trailed off.

"You lied to me. You said she was gonna be okay." She repeated, her words becoming quieter. She put her hands on her head, gripping her hair, eyes watering as she refused to let the tears fall.

"Max..." Steve hesitantly moved towards her. He held out his arms and she fell into them, sobbing into his chest. El clutched Mike's shirt with both hands, dead silent, unable to process what just happened, much like everyone else.

"What am I going to *do*? I can't do this." She cried, minutes later, pushing him away. She took a few deep breaths, trying to calm herself down. She wiped her face and turned towards Hopper. "I want to see her." She croaked.

"You'll be able to tomorrow." He told her. She started to say something but he stopped her, "I wish I could take you to see her, Max, I really do. This isn't up to me. I promise I'll take you first thing in the morning." She nodded. He looked at the rest of the group. "Go back to the living room. Give her some space." Everyone except for Steve and El left, the latter paying no mind to Mike when he tried to get her to follow.

"I can't go back home." Max said, sitting back down after Steve picked the chair back up. She put her face in her hands. "I... She won't see me get married, have kids- if I have them. She won't see me graduate. It's all she wanted... For me to be successful and have a good life but- but how am I supposed to do that without her?"

"You'll get through this, Max." Steve said, setting a comforting hand on her shoulder. "You're strong, you'll be okay."

"Where am I gonna go?" She looked at Hopper. "I can't go back to California. I'm *not* going back."

"Max... I don't know what's gonna happen, but I'm gonna do my best to keep you here, okay?" Hopper told her.

"Why don't you want to go to California?" El asked, tilting her head to the side. "I thought you liked it there."

"I do, I love it. I love you guys more though, and-and my dad isn't much better than Neil was. He didn't hit or anything, he just yells a lot." She wiped her eyes again and took a deep breath. El looked at Hopper.

"She won't go back to live with her dad." She told him matter of factly.

"She'll have to if it's what social services decide-"

"I don't know what that is." El deadpanned. Hopper blinked, surprised at the tone of voice. "Owens can help her. Like he helped me." Max looked at him, her eyes filled with pain.

"Please don't let them send me back there."

"I'll do what I can. I promise."

Okay, not the best ending, but I didn't know how to carry on with the sadness and stuff without it getting ridiculous, so I hope you guys liked it!

Well, I'm sure you didn't *like* it but... you know what I mean.

38. Important author's note!

Soooo, it's been a little over a month- and I have a perfectly good reason, which is writers block. That and I've been thinking about rewriting this story. Recently, to try and get some inspiration, I reread this and I hated some parts, so I've ultimately decided to rewrite it.

I love writing this story and trust me, everything that has happened in the original will happen in this new one- just written slightly different and things are added throughout. There will be some changes, which you'll see as we go.

The chapters are going to be much longer- some up to 6,000 so far. See, I've split up the story into thirteen chapters and I'm now editing and changing and literally rewriting a lot of scenes and dialogue. I think that rewriting Home will help me update more often and a lot quicker than I have been.

I'm sorry if you guys are mad at me! I'm not deleting the original at all, it'll still be up, but the new one will be titled "Home: Remastered". I'm not sure when it'll be out, but at the rate I'm going, chapter 1 will be up within the next day or two!

Don't be angry with me! I love you guys! ~B